

**ENTERTAINMENT OR EDIFICATION? : A  
CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF SIMON GOULART'S  
'THRESOR D'HISTOIRES ADMIRABLES'**

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**MPHIL**

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## ABSTRACT

Simon Goulart (1543 - 1628), one of the most prolific writers of his generation, remains an enigma. Modern historians have repeatedly ignored Goulart's vast literary output, failing to recognise and understand his real importance within the Protestant movement. Goulart's life spanned almost six decades, years which would have a deep and lasting impact upon the Reformed church in general and Goulart's work in particular. Indeed, Goulart recorded many of these formative events in his various historical works. This thesis aims to redress this serious imbalance in both our historical knowledge and our understanding, an attempt to locate Goulart within his rightful place at the centre of late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Reformed life and writing. As will be seen from this thesis, Goulart's life was intimately connected with the history of the Reformed during this turbulent era.

Simon Goulart is by no means an easy figure to understand. From his own writings as well as other contemporary sources, reveal Goulart to be a dynamic but pedantic man, embittered and worn down by years of struggle. A fervent moralist, Goulart leaves the reader with little sense of optimism or satisfaction. As a minister he was relentless in the condemnation of his parishioners; as a historian he was swift to denounce both his enemies and his allies, and as a politician he openly criticised established values and ideas. Whilst never a truly original thinker, as this study of the Histoires Admirables will reveal, Goulart spent much of his life attempting to publicise, persuade and popularise his moral and historical agenda. The Histoires Admirables were a central part of this task. Goulart's views cannot be ignored: they go to the heart of the contemporary world which he both supported and condemned.

A thorough study of Goulart's life and works is revealing of both the moral and the religious situation which existed in Geneva following the death of Calvin in 1564, a period which still remains notably understudied. Goulart simply cannot be divorced from his contemporary world, a world in which he became so deeply

engaged. Not only was Goulart one of the leading pastors in Geneva, but following Beza's death in 1605 he became the principal voice of Reformed politics and belief, both within Geneva and beyond. Beyond this he had an established reputation as a minister and writer with an international following and reputation. Indeed, he was one of the most prominent of all Reformed writers. Through a study of a selected number of Goulart's works, and the Histoires Admirables in particular, not only will Goulart's writings and thought be better understood, but a considerable insight can be gained into his social, political and religious world.

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## INTRODUCTION

Whilst countless books and articles have been written about Geneva during the age of Calvin, the period following his death has remained virtually unknown.<sup>1</sup> Despite this neglect, the later history of Geneva is a rich and vibrant period, a time of consolidation, an attempt to resolve problems which Calvin never had to confront. In a more confessional age, after Calvinism's first successes had been and gone, the Reformed were confronted with a series of complex problems, not least on a literary front. As this study of the life and works of Simon Goulart will demonstrate, Geneva in particular and the Calvinist movement in general, confronted a period of profound and sometimes disturbing change.

By the first decade of the seventeenth-century many Genevan pastors had conceded that the city's heroic age was over. The death of Beza in 1605 symbolised the passing of this era.<sup>2</sup> It was as though a general malaise had settled on this once proud city. No longer was Geneva the centre of the Reformed religion.<sup>3</sup> Worse still, in many respects the Reformation had been a failure, the consequence of years of turbulence and civil wars, most notably in France and the Netherlands, where only partial success had been achieved.<sup>4</sup> Even

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<sup>1</sup> Of the many books written about Geneva during the time of Calvin, perhaps the best is William G. Naphy's The Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation (Manchester, 1994). Other recent biographical studies of Calvin include William J. Bowsma's John Calvin. A Sixteenth Century Portrait (Oxford, 1988) and Alister McGrath's A Life of John Calvin (Oxford, 1990). Today the most comprehensive study of the period following the death of Calvin remains Eugène Choisy's L'État Chrétien à Genève au temps de Theodore de Bèze (Paris, 1902).

<sup>2</sup> See Gillian Lewis, 'Geneva in the time of Calvin and Beza', in Menna Prestwich (ed.), International Calvinism, 1551-1715 (Oxford, 1985), pp.39-70.

<sup>3</sup> During the time of Calvin Geneva was considered by the Reformed a power house of advice, pastors and support. But, as early as the late 1550s the Huguenots began to seek the advice of other Protestant communities as well as act on their own initiative, not surprisingly considering the rapidly changing political situation in the country. Furthermore, Geneva simply did not have the capabilities to respond to the demands for pastors and advice, nor could their advice respond quickly enough to the fast changing events in first France and later the Netherlands.

<sup>4</sup> On the partial success of the Reformed in the Netherlands see Andrew Pettegree's informative article in Andrew Pettegree (ed.) The Reformation in the Parishes: the Ministry and the Reformation in Town and Country (Manchester, 1993), 49-64

Geneva itself was under constant threat, primarily from Savoy.<sup>5</sup> Compounding this whole circumstance, the pastors in Geneva frequently bemoaned the religious situation within the town: the young showed no deference to their elders or even to the pastors, whilst immorality and luxury, as they perceived it, prevailed. From this pessimistic stance little appeared to have changed since the beginning of the Reformation.

This sense of decline was shared by Simon Goulart. Many pastors, like Goulart, had devoted long years of service to Geneva, giving rise to strains and tensions which were becoming increasingly prominent. He himself had faithfully served the city since 1566, becoming an internationally recognised figure through his prolific literary output. Simon Goulart's career is, therefore, an excellent barometer of the changing fortunes of Geneva in this later, less familiar era. Developments in Geneva provided the essential context for his writings. In his own mind at least the sense of disillusionment was reaching crisis point. He was clearly becoming increasingly exhausted, despondent with Geneva and his own position within it. The special relationship which had once existed between Beza and Goulart had long since disappeared, perhaps as a result of Goulart's outspoken opposition to Henry IV, following his abjuration in 1593. His own responsibilities mounted, and still Goulart was writing and preaching. Worse still, perhaps, after Beza's death Goulart was elected to succeed him as head of the Company of Pastors, a responsibility which he did not want, but was forced to assume because there were few men of his calibre and ability in Geneva. Yet, Goulart was by now over 65 years old, and the burden of responsibility was great, perhaps too great. For years, Goulart had felt despair and anguish, frequently and

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<sup>5</sup> The confrontation between Geneva and Savoy reached a climax during the period of the Escalade, a failed attempt by the Savoyards to seize Geneva during a night attack.

always unsuccessfully approaching the Company of Pastors for permission to leave.<sup>6</sup> As his work from this period reveals there was a genuine sense of failure. Goulart, like others, sensed that something had gone wrong.

Little is known about Goulart's early life, in part because his family, whilst seemingly wealthy, were not of particular importance. More importantly, however, Goulart was an intensely private man, intimating few autobiographical details in either his publications or his letters. He was born in Senlis, France on 20 October 1543. Of his mother no details remain, although it is certain that his father, Jacques Goulart, died in Senlis during 1572.<sup>7</sup> From the dedication in the first volume of the Histoires Admirables Goulart described his brother, Jean, as an '...esleu & controlleur des aides...' in Senlis.<sup>8</sup> Jean died several years before Simon, in 1625. It would also seem that he had a sister, although no details are known. At some stage Goulart studied law, although the rest of his education and upbringing remains a mystery.<sup>9</sup> At this stage in his life, if not before, Goulart must have come into contact with Reformed ideas. All that is known for certain is that Goulart fled to Geneva in 1566, and was quickly accepted as a pastor, an indication that Goulart must have obtained some theological training before he came to Geneva.

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<sup>6</sup> This information can be found in the Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs, Volume III, p.61ff. On 4 April 1572 Goulart made the first of three requests to return home following the death of his father. He was refused on the grounds that there was no one to take his place, a shortage of personnel brought about by the recent outbreak of plague. He was refused again on 10 June. A third request, on 1 August, led to his being granted one month's leave of absence.

<sup>7</sup> See *ibid*, p.76, for example. Goulart made several requests to the company of pastors for permission to leave Geneva in 1572 in order to settle his father's estate. From this it can be assumed that his father was a man of substance.

<sup>8</sup> See Thresor d'histoires admirables et memorables, vol.1 (1600). This reference appears on the book's title page.

<sup>9</sup> Although no connection can be established in an unlikely coincidence Calvin was also born in Picardy, both studied law, and both became leaders of the Reformed movement.



Given the parishes of Chancy and Chastigni, Goulart quickly established his career and reputation in Geneva.<sup>10</sup> Within four years this little-known individual had published his first work.<sup>11</sup> During the years which followed Goulart became a figure of increasing importance, not only within Geneva but as a consequence of his writings establishing a distinguished reputation within the wider Protestant community. In 1570 Goulart married for the first time. His bride, Suzanne Picot, was a member of a wealthy and prestigious Genevan family. Her father formed one of the council of the two hundred. Beza himself married the couple, a public sign of their standing within the city. During 1571, however, an even more significant event took place: he was promoted, given the prestigious city parish of Saint Gervais, a parish which he would serve until his death almost five decades later.

His marriage to Suzanne Picot was clearly a happy and well-matched partnership. Together they had some nine children, six of whom made it into adulthood.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, Suzanne died in 1587, leaving her husband in a difficult position. He now faced the prospect of bringing up their young children alone. Whilst there can be no doubt that Goulart was close to his wife, pragmatism won through and he married for a second time later that same year. His second wife was the daughter of Jean Boucher, herself the widow of Antoine de Combes. Of the nine children from his first marriage, perhaps the most famous was that his son Simon. Like his father and namesake, Simon became a pastor, establishing a career in the Netherlands. Unfortunately, being on the wrong side of the Remonstrant

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<sup>10</sup> See Registres, vol.III, p.12. Here it is stated that on 24 November 1566 Goulart was presented as the minister of Chancy and Chastigni. No other details regarding Goulart are given.

<sup>11</sup> This was a translation into French of the Deo Maximo Sacorum, in French given the title Voeu pour les martyrs.

<sup>12</sup> These children were Suzanne, Simon, Anne, Jeanne, Jacques, Gabrielle, Jean, Mariel and Jaël. Suzanne, Gabriel and Marie died in their infancy.



controversy he was forced into exile in order to escape persecution. A second son, Jacques, also became a pastor, working in Picardy.<sup>13</sup> A third son, Jean, gave Goulart cause for concern: he was incarcerated in a hospital in Geneva and would die in 1630. Beyond this, he was also separated from his daughters. In particular, the death of his favourite, Jaël, in 1627, proved a trying time. Another daughter, Anne, had long since moved to Frankfurt where her husband, a pastor, lived and worked. These family affairs were a constant concern.

There can be no doubt that Goulart played a role of increasing importance in the political and religious life of both Geneva and the wider Reformed community. In particular, during the years after 1572, Goulart began his career as a historian and a translator of great importance, skills and abilities which would prove crucial in the later Histoires Admirables. In 1572 Goulart made several requests to the Company of Pastors, asking permission to return home to France in order to arrange his father's estate. Eventually, in August 1572 Goulart was finally given permission to leave for France. Whilst in France Goulart decided to travel to Paris, arriving within a short distance of the capital on the night of the St. Bartholomew's Day massacres. Only two leagues away from the capital, however, Goulart was warned to return to Picardy: the news had spread fast. Goulart only just managed to escape, forced to take a route to Geneva via Strasbourg. These events doubtless shaped Goulart's later reports of the massacres themselves, an event which had touched him so deeply on a personal level. Furthermore, Goulart's biographer has suggested, quite erroneously, that his own narrow escape from France convinced him to become a republican, an

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<sup>13</sup> In one of his many letters Goulart made a rare personal statement regarding his son. On 24 August 1604 Goulart wrote to Scaliger, commenting that, '...mois second fils Jaques Goulart, qui va passer cest hier un l'Academie de Leyden sous messieurs les professues en Theologie...' See Leonard Chester Jones, Simon Goulart, 1543-1628 (Geneva, 1917), p.405.

opinion which he supports through the numerous republican writings Goulart edited and translated. These works included Francis Hotman's controversial Franco - Gallia. There is no evidence, however, which supports the view that Goulart adopted such radical political views. Beyond this, his literary output relating to the 1572 massacres was prodigious. Following Crespin's death shortly before the massacres, Goulart undertook to update the Histoire des martyrs, including victims of the massacres themselves. He also wrote several accounts of the history of France during this turbulent period, including the successful Memoires de l'estat de France sous Charles IX, the first edition of which appeared in 1574, as well as the later Recueil des choses memorables, first published in 1598. These two works confirmed Goulart's reputation as one of the foremost writers of Protestant history. For Goulart, history was the most important medium, justifying and explaining the past and present of both his religious and moral beliefs.

In the years which followed Goulart would write over eighty books, works appearing with considerable regularity. Whilst these works showed Goulart's diverse interests and concerns, from his first publication, the Deo Maximo Sacorum, he showed his interest in, and flair for, translation. Indeed, Goulart became a proficient and skilled linguist, preferring to edit and translate the works of others rather than writing any truly original books. The Histoires Admirables clearly reveals this interest. Amongst the most important works which he would translate and annotate was Johann Weyer's controversial work on witchcraft, De praestigiis damonum, which appeared in French as Cinq Livres de Wier sur les Tromperies des diables in 1579. Goulart further developed his interest in witchcraft, translating from German into French Gaspard Peucer's Des

divinationbus. Amongst his most successful works was his annotated edition of Du Bartas' popular Le Sepmaine, an edition which revealed his vast knowledge of literature, theology and history.

Towards the end of his life a discernible change in his work can be detected. The demands of his pastoral work, along with his writings and increasing age, began to take their toll. An outspoken critic in Geneva, Goulart seemed to court controversy. Not only was Geneva constantly under threat from Savoy, but internally Goulart believed that the apparently blatant immorality of the Genevans would ensure God's wrath was brought upon them. In a now notorious episode, Goulart spoke out against the immoral behaviour of the Genevans following the celebrations which accompanied the signing of a defence agreement between Geneva, Berne and Zürich in April 1585. It would seem that during the celebrations many Genevans had displayed irreverent behaviour, dancing, wearing suggestive clothing, elaborate hairstyles and excessive make-up. As a consequence both Goulart and Beza refused communion to anyone involved, at least until suitable penance had been made. This episode highlighted the emphasis which Goulart placed on moral behaviour and belief, as well as the divergence of opinion between the pastors, the council and the Genevan citizens themselves.<sup>14</sup> Even his historical works never strayed far from this moralising agenda. It was, perhaps more than anything else, the defining force in both his life and literary works.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.44.

Goulart's outspoken attacks upon immorality led to several confrontations with the Genevan council.<sup>15</sup> Even his parishioners complained that he was given to excessive sermonising. Goulart was ordered to limit his sermons to only forty five minutes.<sup>16</sup> He was also brought to check by the council following the banishment of several convicted adulterers. Unfortunately, their expulsion coincided with renewed Savoyard opposition, the council fearing that these disgruntled and displaced individuals would conspire against Geneva. As a consequence, the sentence of banishment was lifted and they were given permission to return. Goulart was outraged. So great was his opposition that he was ordered before the council and forced to apologise. Even Henry IV was condemned by Goulart for his immoral behaviour, not least for his very public adulterous liaisons with Gabrielle d'Estrées and various other courtesans.<sup>17</sup>

Goulart did not even defend his own daughter when she was caught dancing at a wedding on 30 March 1604. Four days later all the accused, including Jaël Goulart, were brought before the council, accused of dancing and singing lewd songs. All were forced to apologise. This episode illustrates Goulart's personal commitment to the values which he would fight for the rest of his life to establish. It also suggests his own sense of fairness: his daughter could not be treated differently from other sinners. In 1626, during a serious outbreak of plague in Geneva, Goulart was sent by the company of pastors to the council in order to berate the luxury and immorality of the times, insinuating that this had caused the

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<sup>15</sup> The Registres again illustrates a notorious episode. Goulart was an outspoken critic of the right to freedom of speech of the pastors during their sermons, a freedom which the council threatened to remove. On 27 November the register asserted, 'Liberté de prédication: Antoine Chauvre et Simon Goulard ont critiqué dans les sermons, le qui s'est dit au conseil des duex cents concernent la commutation des peines'. See Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs, vol.IV(Geneva, 1974), ed. Oliver Labrathe and Bernard Lescaze, p.199.

<sup>16</sup> See Registres, vol. IV, p.170. This declaration was dated November 1576.

<sup>17</sup> See Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs, vol. VI (Geneva, 1980), eds. Sabine Citron and Marie-Claud Junod, p.16f. Partly as a consequence for his outrageous speech against Henry IV Goulart was placed in prison for several days.

plague.<sup>18</sup> As the Histoires Admirables will reveal Goulart was embroiled in a relentless campaign against immorality. Whether the situation was as extreme as Goulart considered remains debatable.

Whilst Goulart spent the greater part of his working life in Geneva, he did on occasion return to France, working with various Huguenot communities. This gave him a considerable insight into the difficulties and problems which the French Reformed were facing during a turbulent time in their history. Following his visit to France in 1572 Goulart did not return to France until 1576 where he worked as pastor in Foujert for several weeks.<sup>19</sup> On 30 October 1582 Goulart was again sent to France, accepting an invitation to work in Tremilly, Champagne.<sup>20</sup> Goulart left Geneva again in March 1589 to be minister to the Reformed army. He asserted that during periods of war immorality increased to a disturbing level, the troops therefore needing spiritual guidance and leadership.<sup>21</sup> Goulart left Geneva again in 1605, working as minister to the Reformed in Grenoble, his visit cut short following the death of Beza earlier that year. Numerous requests were received by the company in Geneva, specifically asking for Goulart's help and guidance. On all but a few occasions these requests were refused.<sup>22</sup> Beyond this Goulart rarely left Geneva. Even his own requests for leave of absence were often

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<sup>18</sup> See Jones, Simon Goulart, p.278. On 8 Sept. 1626 Goulart represented the council for the last time, again complaining about the deplorable lack of morals in Geneva. he asserted, 'Les femmes sont aujourd'huy tellement luxueuses et pleines de vanité que c'est une chose estrange. Elles portent des chaînes et bracelets d'or tout ouvertement, les accouchées de mesme excèdent en leurs habits de couche, et les hommes sont aussi grandement excessifs en leurs habits...et en la grande ignorance qui se trouve en la plupart, mais principalement en ce que le sabbath est violé, estant que plusieurs sortent les jours de dimanche hors de la ville pour aller pourmener, et d'autres seront plustost trouvez dans les tavernes et cabarets, que dans les temples'.

<sup>19</sup> See Registres, vol.IV, p.64.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p.21.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, vol.VI, p.71. Goulart returned two months later. As he would later reveal in his Recueil de choses memorables (Leiden, 1603), Goulart remained deeply concerned by the immoral behaviour which pervaded the army. In a letter dated 5 December 1600 Goulart was again concerned about the army. He wrote to Juste Scaliger that 'Les soldats y one joué des mais parmy les hostellerries & boutiques, ou tant resonne de plainctes, les courtisans n'en one faict que rire'. See Jones, Simon Goulart, p.402ff.

refused.<sup>23</sup> Ultimately, neither the council nor the Company of Pastors wished to lose Goulart and he was persuaded to stay. Like it or not, Goulart would find his life was intimately connected with Geneva.<sup>24</sup>

After the death of Beza, Goulart became indispensable, in effect becoming the leading pastor in the city. As head of the company of pastors, Goulart must have found it a physically and mentally demanding role. Furthermore, he was now a relatively old man, deeply concerned about the future of the Reformed, particularly in France. As will be seen below, this pessimism and concern pervaded his later writings. When Goulart died in 1628 it is clear that he remained a disappointed man, dying with the realisation that the Reformed movement was, in many respects, a failure.

### **The use and meaning of history**

Whilst Goulart was first and foremost a pastor, his writings were of great significance. As a censor in Geneva, Goulart's literary knowledge was put to good use.<sup>25</sup> Beyond this, however, Goulart was a prodigious writer, establishing a reputation as one of the leading Protestant authors of his day. A study of these

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p.216.

<sup>23</sup> His choice of Geneva is not surprising. The academy at Lausanne had written to the Company of Pastors on several occasions requesting Goulart as a professor on theology. The first request was made on 4 March 1584 and the last as late as 18 June 1594. On the first request see Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs (Geneva, 1976) vol. V., eds. Olivier Labarthe and Micheline Tripot, p.110 and on the last request see vol. VI, p.133.

<sup>24</sup> Leonard Chester Jones claimed that Goulart had requested permission to leave because he had suffered from a nervous breakdown, a 'neurasthémie'. See Jones Simon Goulart, p.104. This does not, however, seem to be the likely reason why Goulart wanted to leave Geneva. He had become deeply involved in a legal controversy. Goulart used the pulpit in order to berate the council. Despite their patience Goulart refused to withdraw his statement, again he was threatened with a prison sentence. It was this controversy which seems to be the real reason why Goulart sought to leave Geneva during this period. On this controversy see Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs (Geneva, 1984), vol.VII, eds. Gabriella Cahier and Michel Grandjean, p.25ff.

<sup>25</sup> One of the first examples of Goulart's role as a censor comes from 24 October 1580. Goulart gave permission for the publication of a translation of Histoire d'Androigne. See Registres, vol.IV, p.173



works will always be rewarding, not because they are necessarily unique, but because they enhance and enrich our understanding of the period. Above all, it was his historical works which became of greatest significance, works intimately connected with his religious, moral and political values. As Quentin Skinner asserted, the majority of historians, '...insists on the autonomy of the text itself...and so dismisses any attempt to reconstitute the total context...' <sup>26</sup> Skinner is correct: if the context of Goulart's works are ignored, their purpose and meaning would simply be lost. Unless Goulart's works are carefully studied the life of a remarkable individual can never be truly considered. In particular, without fully understanding the context of the Histoires Admirables this work would become an incomprehensible mix of exotic and unbelievable tales.

But what did Goulart mean by history, and how did he use history? Whilst Goulart does not give any specific information on this subject, an understanding can be made from a study of his historical writings. It is certain that Goulart employed history as a means of justifying and supporting his own agenda. He used history as both a polemical and rhetorical instrument. It was used, above all, as propaganda, a further weapon in the battle against Catholicism. History helped him exonerate the Reformed, a means of explaining their losses and defeats at the hands of their Catholic opponents. As Goulart indicated in the preface to the first volume of the Histoires Admirables only through history could the true ways of God be fully understood. The past was God's revelation to man, and it was vital to study this past in order to learn and make sense of both the present and the future. But history was far more than this. History was a means of education, teaching both young and old the lessons of the past. He wrote, 'Elles sont

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<sup>26</sup> James Tully (ed.), Meaning and Context. Quentin Skinner and His Critics (Oxford, 1988), p.28

memorables aussis, pour le contentment, l'instruction, & les consolation que les bonnes & paisables ames...'<sup>27</sup> Historians, as Goulart perceived it, were there to judge. Like Gramsci in this century and Camerarius in the sixteenth-century, Goulart argued that the past was only useful in that it helped illuminate the present.<sup>28</sup> As Orest Ranum recently wrote, 'Writing history to please and instruct the public ranks high among the ancient commonplaces that early modern writers knew and repeated'.<sup>29</sup> Goulart is a fascinating and rewarding example of this familiar literary behaviour.

The tales which Goulart collected in all his historical works were part of the collective memory, brought together by the well-crafted narrative typical of his works.<sup>30</sup> The need to remember the past, and in particular individuals who had died, was obviously of central importance in Goulart's historical writings. That Goulart's historical works were a collection of earlier works is clear from the introduction to the Histoires Admirables. He wrote, 'L'histoire de nostre temps est un abregé de toutes les merueilles des siecles passez'.<sup>31</sup> The Histoires Admirables, the Recueil de choses memorables, Les Vrais Pourtraits, the Memoires de l'estat de France and of course Histoire des martyrs are packed with examples and invocations to the dead. Of course this was true to the many martyrologists of the sixteenth-century, including Haemstede in the Netherlands, John Knox in Scotland and John Foxe in England. In the martyrologies, the names of the dead are exonerated, whilst the memory of their persecutors vilified. Les Vrais Pourtraits, for example, published in 1581, displayed the importance of

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<sup>27</sup> Goulart, Histoires Admirables, p.5

<sup>28</sup> Tully, Meaning and Context, p.170

<sup>29</sup> Orest Ranum, Artisans of Glory: Writing and Historical Thought in Seventeenth Century France (North Carolina, 1980), p.24

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p., 4ff.



remembrance and recognition. It was a book which praised humanists, Lutherans and Zwinglians alike. As Goulart would do so often in his work, including the Histoires Admirables, theological differences are ignored: only the exoneration of the individual became important. Its aim, like his other historical works, was the illumination and glorification of the Genevan church in particular and the Reformed in general.<sup>32</sup> But Goulart's interest in history and his way of writing history was, of course, conditioned by his own political, social and literary influences. This is where Goulart's principal interest lies: a study of these texts serves to illuminate an often neglected period of Reformed history. Both his immediate situation in Geneva, as well as the broader crisis in the Reformed movement, shaped his reportage.

Goulart's historical methodology was far from unusual during the early modern period. Many writers, several of whom will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters, concurred with Goulart that history was a collection of seemingly disparate tales, fused together by the writer's own narrative. Whilst writers certainly used identical tales, plagiarising without embarrassment, the whole tone and essence of the tale was altered by the writer's individual narrative and assessment. As a consequence, two writers using exactly the same tale often led the reader to vastly different interpretations and conclusions. Indeed, it is rare for any two writers to come to the same conclusions, manipulating and shaping the tale to meet their particular requirements. As Frank Hook wrote in connection with François Belleforest's collection of tales, the Histoires Tragiques, in the hands of Belleforest Bandello's stories had become totally transformed. Instead

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<sup>31</sup> Goulart, Histoires Admirables, p.5.

<sup>32</sup> Simon Goulart, Les vrais portraits des hommes illustres en piete et doctrine (Geneva, 1581), p.ivf.

of retaining Bandello's light-hearted and lightweight text, the book had become a moralising account.<sup>33</sup>

Like Belleforest before him, but with even greater skill, Goulart mastered the ability to collect, translate and interpret a wide range of documents pertaining to the religious, political and social history of the Protestant movement. Only through a study of his works can Goulart's singular ability be considered. He was a sophisticated and talented writer, even if many of his works originated elsewhere. Goulart did, however, make these works his own, building and shaping the material which he used. All his historical works followed a similar agenda: seemingly disparate sources are drawn together by Goulart's skill as a writer. In his Premier volume du recueil contenant les choses memorable aduenues sous la ligue this style is seen most clearly. In essence this whole work is based upon a collection of declarations, letters and edicts of Henry IV, as well as various anti-Catholic, anti-leaguer works, most famously L'Antiguaisart. As Goulart emphasises in his historical narrative, the primary purpose of the work was to clear Henry IV's name of all the slanderous assaults against him, as well as to describe the history of the Reformed during the time of the League. Goulart wrote, '...les choses memorable, qui sont aduenues sous ceste satanque & turbulent Ligue...' <sup>34</sup> Robert Kingdon concurs that Goulart's historical works consisted of a collection of documents strung together by his own narrative.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Frank S. Hook, 'The French Bandello. A Selection With the Original Text Of Belleforest's 'Histoires Tragiques', 1567', in Missouri University Studies, 22 - 23 (1948 - 50), 9 - 46, at p.11.

<sup>34</sup> Simon Goulart, Premier volume du recueil contenant les choses memorables aduenues sous la ligue, qui s'est faicte & eslévee contre la religion reformée, pour l'abolir (? , 1587), sig. aiiir.

<sup>35</sup> See Robert Kingdon, Myths About the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacres, 1572 - 1576 (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), p.4.

In his Memoires de l'estat de France Goulart's historical intention is clear. In essence Goulart did not intend to give an accurate account of the massacres. More, it was a Protestant attack against the French government, a justification for the radical stance of some Huguenots following the massacres.<sup>36</sup> At one and the same time it was an attack against the Catholic government and an act of self-justification on behalf of the Huguenots. Furthermore, in the Histoires Admirables, as well as the Histoire des martyrs, a similar agenda was used. Likewise, in his introduction to the Recueil des choses memorables Goulart explicitly stated that this work was a fusion of other historical collections, he was '...offront à vos nobles Seigneuries le present Recueil, que i'ay trié de diuers liures publiez depuis quelques annees, où les miseres de France...'<sup>37</sup> Once more, different sources, collected from a wide range of oral informants and printed literature, were gathered together to form a complete narrative. Indeed, there was little notion of intellectual property, although Goulart was often careful to name his sources. And, as will be discussed in greater detail below, Goulart's historical works successfully combined both entertainment and edification. Indeed, Goulart's supreme abilities in combining both entertainment and edification in his works is one of the most fascinating and compelling features of his writings.

Whilst it is clear that Goulart arranged his historical works in a specific style and manner, any understanding of what Goulart stood for is necessarily complicated by his use of the word 'histoires', 'recueil' and 'memoires'. In this context 'histoires' cannot simply be translated as history. It is clear, in particular in the

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<sup>36</sup> Whilst there can be no doubt that the literary stance of many Huguenot writers became increasingly radical after the massacres, many of the works which were published in the wake of the massacres had in fact been written before 1572.

<sup>37</sup> Simon Goulart, Recueil des choses memorables auenues en France sous le regne de Henri II, François II, Charles IX, Henri III et Henri IV, depuis l'an M.D.XLVII iusques au commencement de l'an M.D.XCVII (Leiden, 1603).

Histoires Admirables, that the use of the word history did not imply any confirmation of the veracity of the tales incorporated. This collection of tales, as well as others like them, were designed to be awe inspiring, moralising, fantastical and miraculous, and as such form fascinating source material. Goulart was not alone of his contemporaries in holding this opinion-indeed, as will be discussed in the following chapter this was a widely held point of view. Goulart included many of these tales in the full knowledge that they were not truly historical: his main concern centred around the beliefs which could be culled from the tales. Ultimately, the veracity of the tales was not important; it was the moral lessons which were central to the work as a whole.

For Goulart the whole purpose of 'histoires' was a means of understanding contemporary concerns through a consideration of the past. His works, including the Histoires Admirables, were a product of their times, a reflection of contemporary concerns and opinions. Consequently, his works, if considered in isolation, will be misunderstood. As Goulart asserted in his introduction to the Histoires Admirables only through a study of the past, could the present be understood. History, as an accurate study of the past was not Goulart's concern. Instead, he sought out the moralising and entertaining agenda inherent in the past, manipulating and utilising a vast number of disparate tales in order to instruct his readers. These historical works were designed to fulfil a very particular need, at a very particular time. Indeed, Goulart's historical works were so deeply embedded in the contemporary world that the Memoires de l'estat de France was not published after 1579. The political circumstances of the Huguenots had changed so markedly that the Memoires were no longer relevant.

For Goulart, and doubtless for other writers of his era, history became a 'res gestae', an account of all the memorable and fascinating events of the past. These same tales passed with ease from one generation of writers to the next. Whilst some of the particulars of the tale did change, in its essentials the story remained intact. The moral of the tale was, of course, timeless, this being the fundamental importance of the tale in the first instance. Like an ancient Greek audience watching a tragedy, Goulart's readers would have been familiar with the tale, and would not have appreciated too many additions and interpolations, these tales being part of a well-known body of texts. But the tales were manipulated and given a different emphasis depending on the writer's political, religious and social persuasion. As Orest Ranum writes, these tales were part of a familiar literary heritage, '...different each time only because of the changes in the mood or style which marked the unique contributions of the author-historian'.<sup>38</sup> This is why Goulart's works remain both fascinating and compelling.

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<sup>38</sup> Orest Ranum (ed.), National Consciousness, History and Political Culture in Early Modern Europe (Baltimore, 1975), p.13.

## **CHAPTER ONE:**

### **THE CREATION OF A GENRE**

#### **Introduction - The Histoires Admirables**

The Histoires Admirables, the central work examined in this thesis, is a fascinating and extraordinary collection. Whilst little interest has been shown in this work by recent historians, this collection of tales is not only central to an understanding of Goulart's life and intellectual milieu: it reveals many important aspects of the genre of which it is a part. By discussing this work in the context of his life, as well as various contemporary works of a similar nature, both Goulart and his literary world can be better considered and understood. Once again, Goulart's works broaden our knowledge of this period.

The Histoires Admirables remains a remarkable achievement: four volumes of collected materials relating to a mesmerising array of subjects. The first volume of this work was published in 1600, with all the connotations of the beginning of a new century and a new era. The second volume was published in 1604, thereafter the first two volumes were almost always reprinted together. Volume three was published in 1610 and the final volume in 1614 but these final two works never proved as popular or as successful as the first two parts, despite the similarity of theme and subject. Indeed, recent historians who have glanced at the Histoires Admirables have tended to ignore the later two volumes of the work.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Only a few historians have considered the Histoires Admirables. One of the most recent, however, is Stuart Clark in his Thinking With Demons (Oxford, 1997). But, despite this, there is no suggestion that Clark went beyond the English translation Goulart's work, a translation which went no further than the



In part, its sheer scale is daunting, well over two thousand pages in length, and exceeding other works of its kind which appeared at this time. The first two volumes quickly became an international popular success, going through numerous French editions, as well as translations into English, Dutch and German.<sup>40</sup> Demand for and interest in an English translation was almost certainly stimulated by the appearance of several similar works which were prepared for an English audience during this period. Amongst the most famous were Thomas Beard's A Collection of Histories, as well as numerous translations into English of the works of Matteo Bandello, François de Belleforest and Pierre Boaistuau.<sup>41</sup>

In the Histoires Admirables Goulart's interests were certainly eclectic. His subjects ranged through witchcraft, murder, miscarriages of justice, adultery, clandestine marriage, multiple births, caesarean births, gambling, dancing, monsters, celestial signs, historical events, shipwrecks and battles, as well as the tales of Martin Guerre and Guy Fawkes. Within the volumes themselves the texts are based around broad, general themes, in loose alphabetical order. Like many works of this period, it had the nature of a compilation. Carefully chosen extracts are presented from numerous works which he had read and considered, doubtless for the edification and the entertainment they provide. Goulart frequently adds his

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very first volume. A second author who has shown an interest in the Histoires Admirables is Natalie Zemon Davis. She was also drawn to the first volume of the Histoires Admirables because of the use which Goulart made of the tale of Martin Guerre. On Davis' use of the Histoires Admirables see her article 'From the Prodigious to the Heinous: Simon Goulart and the Reframing of Imposture' in L'Histoire Grande Ouvert, Hommage à Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (Paris, 1997), eds. André Burguière, Joseph Gayt and Marie Jeanne Tits-Dievaide, 277-283.

<sup>40</sup> An English translation made by Edward Grimeston with the title Admirable and memorable histories containing the workes of our time (London, 1607).

<sup>41</sup> Pierre Boaistuau's Certaine Secrete Wonders of Nature was first published in English in 1569. Two well-known translations of François de Belleforest appeared in English. Belleforest published his first volume of translations of Bandello in 1559 and the last in 1582. The first English translation appeared in 1566, an accurate and entertaining translation. This was William Painter's Palace of Pleasure. A second volume appeared at a later date. This was a very popular work, skilfully combining

own commentary, guiding and leading the reader towards the intended moral of the tale. The original author and provenance are almost always given for a wide range of sources in a remarkable range of languages. Goulart clearly felt comfortable with Latin, Hebrew, Greek, German, French and Dutch texts, some of which he translated specifically for inclusion in this work. His knowledge of contemporary literature was outstanding, and he was seemingly never at a loss for appropriate and recent examples. If the reader gains nothing else from a study of this fascinating text, it will be a deeper understanding of the range of works which were popular during this period. He was clearly a master of this genre.

### **Entertainment or Edification?**

But why did Goulart choose to write this work, and how does it compare with other contemporary compilations of this kind? Surely, such a vast work was not intended to be a work of mere entertainment. The clearest statement as to why the work was written can be found in the preface to the first volume. As Goulart makes clear, the tales which he included were not to be taken as literal truths; and yet what possible moralising or edifying value could such stories possess? And why did he decide to include these specific tales? Goulart's intentions become somewhat clearer from the full title of his work. Entitled the Thresor d'histoires admirables de nostre temps it is apparent that his source material was taken exclusively from his contemporary and near contemporary world. Only a handful of his examples can be dated from before 1500. This contrasts sharply with similar contemporary works, most of which rely heavily upon material collected

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Belleforest's mix of the moral and entertaining. A second translation appeared the following year, 1567, Geoffrey Fenton's Tragicall Discourses. This was a largely inaccurate work.



from the classical world, including the works of Homer and Plutarch, two writers who remained immensely popular during this period.<sup>42</sup> Goulart wanted to use works from the previous century in order to illustrate the concerns and problems of his own age as a new century began. When Goulart wrote in his preface, 'L'histoire de nostre temps est vn abregé de toutes les merueilles des siecles passez...' it is clear that he intended to use history in order to instruct others.<sup>43</sup> Whilst Goulart certainly did believe that important moral lessons could be learnt from both pagan and Christian authors, his focus in the Histoires Admirables was more recent works. Only through the past, looking retrospectively over a vast array of actions and events, could man learn many fundamental moral and religious truths.<sup>44</sup> Further, Goulart asserted that in this work he had no interest in relating tales from times long gone; his only concern here was with relevant, supposedly more recent historical episodes, 'Mais laissent pour ceste fois les autres histoires anciennes, nostre intention n'estant d'y toucher en ces recueils, ains reseuant cela pour quelques autres mains & ouvrages: ie presenterai des exemples de nostre temps, touchant les imprecations & paroles despit contre Dieu, ou contre le prochain'.<sup>45</sup>

Goulart asserted from the outset that he expected and intended his readers to be not only entertained but educated, even if the events described had never taken place. He even warns that the title history can be misleading: historians, he declared, never necessarily intend to tell the truth. Ultimately, it was the basic

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<sup>42</sup> Plutarch was made particularly popular through the translation into French by Jacques Amyot, Les oeuvres morales et meslees de Plutarque de Cheronee (Lyon, 1611). This famous translation was used throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth-century.

<sup>43</sup> Goulart, Histoires Admirables, vols. 1 & 2, p.5.

<sup>44</sup> In the Histoires Admirables Goulart was only concerned with episodes from the recent past.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p.283.

moral guidelines which mattered. Whilst many of these tales are clearly works of fiction rather than fact, this should not detract from the overall moralising intention of the tale in particular, and the book in general. Goulart himself was obviously unconcerned that many of the tales were historically and factually dubious. He was only concerned that they were relevant, memorable, instructive and informative. As Goulart had already shown in his numerous historical works, and his collection of tales pertaining to the history of sixteenth-century France in particular, history showed the providential ways of God. All contemporary events were controlled by the hand of God; nothing, it appears, happened by chance. As the tales in the Histoires Admirables reveal history lent reassurance to the faithful, but foretold disaster for the sinner.<sup>46</sup> In his address to the reader, Goulart is swift to assert the importance of fundamental, but essentially non-confessional values in the everyday life of his readers. Whilst Goulart could be criticised for his lack of originality, the very success of the book was dependent upon the original presentation of already familiar material. In this lay the accessible, memorable and entertaining nature of the work as a whole. Indeed, it was within this context that Goulart's craft and skill were challenged. As a writer he was able to use and reuse these familiar tales with excellent effect.

In his address to the reader Goulart claimed that it was the fundamental duty of all men to fear God and live a life in accordance with His commandments. More specifically, Goulart asserted that, 'Il les appelle Admirables, à cause que les raisons d'une grand' part d'icelles sont fort essongnees de mon apprehension, & qu'il y a du miracle, ce semble. Elles sont Memorables aussi, pour le

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<sup>46</sup> The relationship between Goulart and history has been briefly discussed in Jacques Pireaux, 'Simon

contentment, l'instruction, & les consolations que les bonnes & paisables ames en pourront recueillir'.<sup>47</sup> Whilst some tales might seem, at first sight, incomprehensible, Goulart is swift to guide the reader, leading towards the intended moral of a particular tale. Even tales which can seem banal, in essence reveal the mysterious and often unpredictable power of God over the human world. Ultimately, this work had the intention of guiding and instructing individuals to live a Godly and therefore moral life, 'Le but de ce recueil & des suivans sera, Craignez Dieu, gardez ses commandemens: viola le tout de l'homme. Car Dieu amenera toute oeuvre en iugement, touchant tout ce qui est caché, soit bien, soit mal.'<sup>48</sup> Whilst the centrality of providence is made clear in his historical writings Goulart, like other Protestant writers, were deeply unsettled by the massacres of 1572. How could God be Protestant and watch the deaths of thousands of his faithful followers? Once again, history provided the key, and the book of martyrs in particular. Thousands converted to Catholicism in the wake of the massacre, despite the impassioned plea that those who died had been sacrificed for their religion and were surely counted among the elect. As a consequence of the massacres, Protestant history took on a further role: it served to justify the faith from within, as well as attack the forces of Catholicism in general and later the League in particular. In Goulart's hands history became far more than an account of the past; it had become a powerful political and religious weapon. History was a propagandist tool as common during this, as well as other periods.

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Goulart et les voies de sacré', in *Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire du Protestantisme Français*, 135, 1989, pp.159 - 175.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p.5.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p.6.

In his original preface to the reader in 1600 Goulart hoped and expected that in the new century God would give inspiration to many to keep diaries and records of similar memorable events, in order to teach and instruct future generations. Again, this should be taken as an indication that Goulart believed that the reformation of behaviour was a constant and perpetual problem.<sup>49</sup> Each generation needed to heed contemporary warnings. He wrote, 'A la miene volonte qu'en ce nouveau siecle Dieu suscite des personnages qui en diuers lieux soiet soigneux de marquer en Diaires & Annales, tout ce que nous voyons digne d'estre reserué pour l'enseignement de nos successeurs'.<sup>50</sup> Placed within this context the Histoires Admirables was clearly more than a digest of interesting and entertaining bedtime yarns.

### Contemporary Influences

Goulart was aware that for some the moral of each tale might not be obvious or apparent. Perhaps influenced by his training as a pastor, he remains close on hand throughout the work, guiding his readers towards the intended moral of the tale. Goulart is often judgmental in this work, and is anything but an unbiased commentator, but he serves to clarify either his praise or condemnation. He is also extremely meticulous in his use of source material, on almost every occasion giving a reference for each particular extract. This might not, of course, be the original reference, but simply the one which he found most accessible.

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<sup>49</sup> It does not, however, seem likely that immorality had increased during this period, despite the significant outcry, both orally and in print.

<sup>50</sup> Goulart, Histoires Admirables, vols. 1 & 2, p.6.

It is apparent that Goulart had a central body of works from which he mined examples. Authors which he frequently relied upon include George Buchanan's prose works, Michel de Montaigne, Philip Camerarius, François de Belleforest, Pierre Boaistuau, Johann Weyer and his French rival Jean Bodin, Amboise Paré, Claude Lonicer, Andrew Honsdorff, Gaspard Peucer and Paul Eitzen.<sup>51</sup> This was the climate of thought which provided Goulart with his examples and many of his opinions.<sup>52</sup> Many of these works would also have provided useful examples of style and content for his own Histoires Admirables. Indeed, Goulart had very close connections with several of these works. He had, for example, translated Gaspard Peucer's work on divination into French. Likewise, furthering his interest in witchcraft, he also completed a controversial translation of Weyer's work in 1588.<sup>53</sup> Further, Goulart also translated Camerarius' collection of tales, The Meditations, from German into French.<sup>54</sup> Clearly, he used sources with which he was doubtless familiar, as well as relying upon numerous historical works. Goulart was at his best when absorbed in contemporary literature, collecting materials and forming them into a coherent whole. Indeed, his most popular and enduring works tended towards collections of historical materials, such as Crespin's Histoires des martyrs, as well as his detailed analysis of the recent histories of Geneva, France and the Netherlands. He was both a prolific

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<sup>51</sup> Amongst the works which Goulart used are Michel de Montaigne's Essais; Philip Camerarius' Meditations; François de Belleforest's Histoires Tragiques; Pierre Boaistuau's Certaine Secrete Wonders of Nature and Theatre of the World; Johann Weyer's De praestigiis damonum; Jean Bodin's La Demonomanie des Sorciers; Philip Lonicer's collection of Andrew Hondorffio's Theatre of Examples; Gaspard Peucer's Divinations and Paul Eitzen's Book of Morals.

<sup>52</sup> In this work, Goulart's primary concern was collecting recent source material. As a consequence, therefore, the classical authors, such as Herodotus and Tacitus, are conspicuous by their absence. In contrast, Camerarius' Meditations, does contain illusions to classical authors. See, for example, p.3 in which both Plutarch and Homer are mentioned.

<sup>53</sup> Weyer's work was entitled De praestigiis damonum which Goulart translated in 1578. In French it was given the title Cinq livres de Wier sur les Tromperies des diables.

<sup>54</sup> Although Goulart's translation, the Les Méditations Historiques did not appear until 1603 it is clear that he had a long standing and deep interest in this work. There can be no real doubt that Goulart was

and an able collector. He was a skilled and accurate writer, with a clear notion of the needs and requirements of a 'popular' audience.<sup>55</sup>

When the first volume of the Histoires Admirables was published Goulart had been a pastor in Geneva for nearly forty years. His own sense of disappointment, as a new century approached, is clear. Indeed, Goulart's pessimism pervades the work as a whole. If the Histoires Admirables is any indication, little appeared to have changed since the beginning of the Reformation. He remains concerned with the most fundamental aspects of the reformation of behaviour, aware that whilst many were willing to accept the doctrinal changes of the church, the alteration of personal behaviour was a far more complex and difficult task. Even if this is a distorted and exaggerated view of his contemporary world, Goulart remained convinced that this was an accurate consideration of the society in which he both lived and worked. As Goulart had already indicated in his historical works, and the Recueil de choses memorables in particular, men simply could not ignore the apparently obvious connection between immorality and the innumerable acts of violence, injustice and even war which pervaded all their lives. In a striking paragraph in the Recueil de choses memorables he asserted this belief with clarity and force: immorality, he tells us, had a negative impact on our everyday life. In this work, concerned with events in France before and during the Wars of Religion, Goulart cites the Huguenot army as a particularly deplorable example of depravity and immorality. The implication is not difficult to discern: their

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inspired by Camerarius' earlier work and believed that it was of such great importance that he was moved to produce his own French translation.

<sup>55</sup> During this period, the early seventeenth-century, Goulart's readership would have mainly consisted of those members of the social elite who were literate, and therefore a minority of the population. As ever during this period, the views of the majority can only be inferred from works intended for the elite.



behaviour was, in part, responsible for a succession of tragic defeats, and serious losses in terms of both men and money throughout the Wars of Religion. Whilst never wavering in his belief in, and support for, the Reformed faith, Goulart's views stand apart from many of his contemporaries as markedly critical.

With respect to the Huguenot army, Goulart found their behaviour morally deficient. He declared that during the early years of the army's formation discipline had been severe and rigorous, but the word of God recognised and respected. At first, blasphemy was condemned, no cards, dice or women were permitted, and public prayers and psalms were heard daily. He wrote

On n'oyoit point de blasphemes parmi toutes les troupes du Prince. Il ne s'y trouuoit ni dez ni cartes: les femmes en estoyent bannies...soir & martin à l'assiete & au leuer des gardes, les prieres publiques se faisoient, & l'air retentissant du chant des Pseaumes.<sup>56</sup>

This respect did not last, however. With time, according to Goulart morality within the Huguenot steadily degenerated into immorality. Furthermore, in a letter dated from 1600 Goulart again voiced his complaints regarding the immorality seemingly apparent within the Huguenot army. He wrote 'Les soldats y on joué des mains parmy les hostelleries & boutiques, au tant resonne de plainctes.'<sup>57</sup> As Godly order broke down, so too did order and discipline within the army. Although not stated explicitly, it is clearly implied that the difficulties, losses and failures which constantly beset the Huguenot army were, at least in part, the consequence of the immoral behaviour of the soldiers. At a time when

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<sup>56</sup> Goulart, Recueil des choses memorables avenues en France sous le regne de Henri II, Charles IX, Henri III et Henri IV, depuis l'an M.D.XLVII jusques au commencement de l'an M.D.XCVII. Contenant infinies merueilles de nostre siecle (Leiden, 1603), p.154.

they should have been setting an example, the Huguenots behaved no differently from their Catholic adversaries. As Goulart would make strikingly apparent in the Histoires Admirables, the immoral behaviour of a few had devastating implications for the majority. In a sense, therefore, the Huguenot army became an important metaphor for society in general. Even more serious, Goulart believed, was the distinct lack of morality displayed by the temporal leaders of society. Again, in the Recueil de choses memorables, Goulart heavily criticised the blatant immorality at the French court. He leaves us with no doubt that immorality and godlessness would persist, change being dependent upon both the king and his advisors accepting fundamental moral reform. How could laws against adultery, clandestine marriage and pre-marital pregnancy take effect, Goulart insists, when the king and his entourage flouted every moral decree?

Whilst the Histoires Admirables sought to provide moral and religious guidance, it is difficult to avoid Goulart's deeply embedded pessimism, a sense of hopelessness he shared with numerous contemporaries in Geneva. Many pastors, like Goulart, had devoted long years of service to the city, giving rise to strains and tensions which were becoming increasingly prominent. He himself had faithfully served Geneva since 1566, but it was clear that all was not well. Indeed, in 1595 and again in 1604 he appeared to suffer a nervous breakdown, doubtless due to the pressures of work. Even so his responsibilities increased, in particular

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<sup>57</sup> See Leonard Chester Jones, Simon Goulart (Geneva, 1917), p.398. This letter was written on 15 December 1600, in Geneva, addressed to Joseph-Juste Scaliger.



following the death of Beza in 1605. These were significant additional burdens, and the responsibility was perhaps too great.<sup>58</sup>

Developments in Geneva provided the essential context for his writings, as well as his immediate audience and inspiration. As a consequence, the despair felt by many of his colleagues inevitably effected Goulart. For example, in comparison to its heyday in the 1550s and 1560s, Geneva was probably no longer the centre of reform by the turn of the sixteenth-century.<sup>59</sup> Even its once acclaimed academy had been eclipsed by the new centres of Reformed learning in the Netherlands. Where once John Knox could claim that Geneva represented the most perfect vision of God on earth, Goulart considered a far different reality. Immorality, as the pastors perceived it, remained a perpetual problem. As Goulart and others were slow to learn there remained a wide chasm between theoretical arguments and actual behaviour. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion, after reading the Histoires Admirables, that Goulart was despondent about Geneva, and the broader reform movement. As his work from the turn of the century period reveals, a genuine climate of failure persisted. Goulart, like others, sensed that something had gone wrong.

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<sup>58</sup> A succinct account of Geneva during this turbulent time can be found in Gillian Lewis' 'Calvinism in Geneva in the time of Calvin and of Beza (1541-1605) in Menna Prestwich (ed.), International Calvinism.

<sup>59</sup> During the early years of the Calvinist breakthrough in France there is no doubt that the main influence, both in terms of literature and leadership, came from Geneva, and more specifically Calvin. Even before Calvin's death, however, the focus had changed. Increasingly, French Calvinists, sought a range of influences and opinions, not least from the burgeoning Calvinist state in the neighbouring Netherlands. Furthermore, as even the French Confession of Faith revealed, at a very early stage the French Calvinist leaders were willing and able to take their own decisions, even contrary to Genevan advice. As events moved with great rapidity in France, Calvin and his successors were doubtless out of touch. Calvin's advice, for example, simply had little relevance to the situation of many French Huguenots who were suffering under the great burden of persecution and war.

Whilst Goulart was convinced that Geneva remained a haven for vice and iniquity, he was also well placed to scrutinise the moral behaviour of the Huguenots. His contacts in France were wide-ranging, in part because he remained in close contact with several eminent French pastors, but also because he himself returned there on several occasions to serve various Protestant communities. This was vital: it gave Goulart firsthand knowledge of the difficulties which the Reformed communities faced on a daily basis. As he must have realised, few communities even had their own pastor to offer guidance, both spiritual and moral. Whilst there is no certainty that Goulart was writing his Histoires Admirables for a specific audience, it is clear that this work severely attacked and condemned the morality, behaviour and superstitions of the Calvinists. He had a deep understanding of both the demands and needs of the church in France. Indeed, the greater part of his working life was devoted to writing the history of the Huguenots. The Histoires Admirables sought to provide an adequate warning. Time and again in this work both the sinners themselves are punished, as well as the wider community, condemned because they allowed this behaviour to persist. One example from the Histoires Admirables usefully illustrates this point. In 1536 a dissolute marriage apparently took place in a village in France, 'Enuiron l'an 1536, vn iour de Dimanche en esté, se sirent des nopces fort excessiues & dissolues en certaine petit ville à demi-iournee pres de Poictiers...'.<sup>60</sup> Later that same day the village as a whole was punished: a storm devastated the town, symbolically destroying the church, a definite and unmistakable sign that God condemned the community for its acceptance of dissolute and immoral behaviour. During the conflagration, the image of the

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p.246. By dissolute Goulart typically meant a clandestine marriage. A clandestine marriage

virgin was destroyed, the crucifix incinerated and the bells in the tower melted. There could be no stronger indication of God's omnipotence and power within each and every community. God clearly watched and judged every action, however mundane or apparently innocuous.

### **Le Sage Vieillard**

In an even more personal work, written concurrently to the Histoires Admirables, Goulart underlines a sense of hopelessness and despair at the prevailing situation in Geneva and France. This work, '...a mixt Subject of morall & diuine documents & instructions...', is a poignant and revealing document.<sup>61</sup> First published in 1605, Le Sage Vieillard lays out Goulart's consideration of the two extremes within society: the old and the young. He stresses the roles of each in their community, the problems inherent in deviant and antisocial behaviour, as well as the importance of upholding moral order in both the public and the private domain.<sup>62</sup> As his readers had come to expect from his previous works, individual behaviour had a clear impact on the lives of both individuals and society in general. As Goulart asserted in the Histoires Admirables a community which allowed sin to remain unchecked were guilty of collective sin, and would suffer a collective punishment. Individuals were left with no doubt that each had a responsibility to reform, not only to protect their own soul, but in order to preserve the religious well-being of their neighbours. In Le Sage Vieillard the reader is left with a deep sense of Goulart's own personality and compassion for

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usually went ahead without the reading of the banns, sometimes in a parish remote from that of the couple and even without parental support and presence.

<sup>61</sup> Simon Goulart, El Sage Vieillard (London, 1621), trans. Thomas Williamson, A3r.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p.4.

him, the attempt of one man to understand and reform the society in which he lived and worked. Goulart is clearly the wise old man suggested in the title. These are the thoughts of an elderly man, reaching the final years of his life, assessing his work and purpose, still driving towards the idealised reformed church of the early years of the Reformation. Once again Goulart enhances our understanding of this period, not least because he offers a deeply personal insight into the society in which he lived and worked.

Le Sage Vieillard, like the Histoires Admirables, is a warning to younger generations to reform or be damned. Likewise, both books serve as a warning to the city and people he had served for so many decades. Goulart is there to caution the reader that the only true life is one spent pleasing God, and not living for our own self-fulfilment.<sup>63</sup> Only a wise old man has the knowledge and the ability to make such judgements, utilising years of experience and wisdom. Above all, he warns, those who have sinned will fear old age and death. Better to be one of the elect, able to welcome death and the life to come, 'Therefore all Christians ought to remain undoubted and resolved in this point, that there is no kind of maladie, torment or death, which hurt's God's elect...'<sup>64</sup> As Goulart warns, only a moral and Godly existence can ensure that the life to come will be free from everlasting torment and anguish.<sup>65</sup> In the Histoires Admirables this became a constant refrain.

Everywhere we look in Le Sage Vieillard Goulart's unhappiness and despair is clear. This is certainly not the work of a man satisfied with his life and

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p.4.

achievements, perhaps reflecting the mood which prevailed in Geneva during this period. Whilst Goulart certainly exaggerated the immoral behaviour of the Reformed, Goulart does reflect the prevailing contemporary view. As Goulart confirms, following the fall of Adam and Eve, mankind had been doomed to mortal sin. Even so, there had been hope: reform had been possible, but mankind (and presumably the Genevans in particular) had become increasingly corrupt and depraved.<sup>64</sup> Throughout his life as a pastor, Goulart truly believed that immorality was rife. Although his assessment should not be taken at face value, his views were shared by many of his contemporaries. Furthermore, these opinions provide the fundamental backdrop for the Histoires Admirables. In both works the same opinions materialise, Goulart using his position as a pastor to promote and enforce individual reform. The moralising and edifying agenda was strikingly similar.

### **Goulart's Contemporaries**

Whilst the Histoires Admirables became an exceptionally popular work, remaining in print until the end of the seventeenth-century, it was certainly not the only work of its kind. It belonged to a distinct genre, very popular at the time, but little studied in recent years. Several of these works, including Philip Camerarius' Meditations, Thomas Beard's A Collection of Histories out of Sacred, Ecclesiasticall, and Prophane Authors, Concerning the Admirable Iudgements of God upon the Transgressours of his commandements, François de Belleforest's immensely popular translation from Italian of Bandello's novellas

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p.158.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p.15.

and various compilations by Philip Boaistuau would certainly have been available to Goulart.<sup>67</sup> These works also bear a striking similarity to the Histoires Admirables: both have a dual agenda, the entertainment and edification of their audience. Moreover, these works contain evidence of source mining, but unlike Goulart have no preference for time or place, and willingly combine both classical and more recent sources, a common feature during this period. Despite this, the works share examples and material, Goulart even taking examples straight from books of moral examples, rather than the original source itself. Frequent examples were taken from Paul Eitzen's book of morals, as well as Andrew Honsdorff's Theatre of Examples. In his confident use of source material the breadth and depth of his knowledge of contemporary literature is remarkable.

A study of these contemporary works reveals a common moralising and edifying agenda, the consequence of a similar humanistic past. In comparison to the introduction to the Histoires Admirables, a strikingly similar sentiment can be found in Boaistuau's conclusion to his Theatre of the World. He believed that the purpose of this work was '...to the end that we may learne by the great miseries and difficulties that God hath sent us, the great fragilite and miseries...For when that hys wrath is kindled against our sinnes he meant us to felle the dartes of his rigourous justice...'<sup>68</sup> Meanwhile, in England, similar sentiments and arguments were being raised. Thomas Beard, for example, determined that his translation of several French works into English would have a similar intention and purpose. In the introduction to his A Collection of Histories Beard wrote that history was

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p.20.

<sup>67</sup> That Goulart had read these works is clear from his constant reference to both these books in the Histoires Admirables.

<sup>68</sup> Boaistuau, Theatre, p.146.



both necessary and profitable because it recalled to mind the truth of the past, as well as warnings and punishments.<sup>69</sup> Further, Beard asserted

...that the greatest part of men go clean contrary, they dreame upon mercie, & neuer thinke upon iustice & iudgement; and that is the cause why more perish by presumption than despaire: for this cause it seemed to me most necessary to call unto mens memories the wonderfull iugemens of God, & to set before their eies a view of his iustice manifested in the world upon sinners & reprobats, to the end that the drouisie consciences of Gods children might be awakened...<sup>70</sup>

Goulart would, doubtless, have concurred with Beard who strongly believed that the purpose of his book was that both men and women should learn to admire and hold in reverence God's creation and perpetual presence in the world. Both authors hoped that the moral examples included in their work would lead men away from sin and temptation in the future. They also agreed that all men should stand in awe of His judgements, and provide examples of when and why God punished men for their sins. Beard asserted, 'And to the end that the justice of God may more clearly appear and showe itself in such strange events...'<sup>71</sup> As Beard stated, 'These are the theatre of God's judgements...Everyman should be warned...', a phrase equally applicable to the Histoires Admirables.<sup>72</sup> Once again, the book's moralising intention is of fundamental importance. Little wonder, therefore, that even the young Oliver Cromwell found much to learn from such a work.

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<sup>69</sup> For a discussion of the use and meaning of the word history see the introductory chapter.

<sup>70</sup> Beard, p.A3r.

<sup>71</sup> Bear, p.B3r.

<sup>72</sup> Beard p.182.



Even more striking is the relationship between the Histoires Admirables and Philip Camerarius' Meditations. It would seem likely that Goulart was not only familiar with this work, but mined examples from it, using it as a template for his own work.<sup>73</sup> Perhaps the similarities between the two books should not be all that surprising considering Goulart's deep interest in the work which resulted in his own translation of the Meditations in 1603. Whether deliberate or not, Camerarius and Goulart held strikingly similar views voiced within a familiar context. Whilst Camerarius does rely upon and includes numerous examples from classical sources, many of the examples are in fact common to both writers.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, although Camerarius organised his work around themes and Goulart in an alphabetised form, the issues addressed by both writers is held in common. Indeed, in his own address to the reader, Camerarius cites remarkably similar reasons for his collection of tales. He asserts his hope that this collection of works would direct the reader towards greater acts of piety, justice, temperance and many other such virtues. Further, that these tales would reveal the consequences of vice and immorality, and would serve as a warning and a deterrent. Like the Histoires Admirables, the Meditations is packed with an eclectic array of examples, all leading and guiding the reader towards more morally 'appropriate' behaviour.

A further example of the genre known and exploited by Goulart was François de Belleforest's French translation of Matteo Bandello's Italian tales. Bandello (1480-1562) was an Italian cleric, who made his name as the writer of numerous successful novellas. This collection of some two hundred and fourteen tales were

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<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Goulart, Histoires Admirables, vols. 1 & 2, p.43f, 286f and 1008.

exceptionally popular, and were frequently used as source material, most famously by William Shakespeare who transformed some of these stories into the plays of Romeo and Juliet, Much Ado About Nothing, Hamlet and Twelfth Night. In the hands of Belleforest, and subsequent English admirers, these seemingly innocuous and entertaining tales were given greater depth in order to instil in their readers important social and moral values, values identifiable in the Histoires Admirables.<sup>75</sup>

Whilst Bandello certainly did not emphasise the moral inherent within these tales, in the hands of Belleforest the moralising and instructive potential of the work became its *raison d'être*. In so doing the whole emphasis of the tales is reoriented. In the original Bandello used the introduction as an opportunity to detail the origin of the story. In contrast, Belleforest uses this opening to announce the central moral of the tale. In order to emphasise the moral of the tale still further, Belleforest added his own commentary. In so doing, he included a warning to a particular section of society, often the young. It is clear, therefore, that Belleforest was not a literal translator, but manipulated these tales in order to meet his own needs. As Frank Hook writes, 'Belleforest clearly regarded the instructional value of these histories as their principal recommendation'.<sup>76</sup> For Goulart, the motivation was identical; moral instruction always came before the entertainment of his readers, it was his prime motivation and purpose. Just as Belleforest

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<sup>74</sup> Amongst the classical sources used by Camerarius were Homer and Plutarch.

<sup>75</sup> François de Belleforest was born in 1530 in Guienne. Following the death of his father when he was only eight his mother placed him in the care of Marguerite d'Angoulême. He later went to university at Bordeaux and studied law at Toulouse. Never completing his degree, he was persuaded to go to Paris in order to earn his living as a writer. His successful work, Histoire des neuf rois Charles des France earned him the title historiographe de France, a title which was taken away some time later. At this stage he took to translation work. The Histoires Tragiques first appeared in 1559, compiled of six tales by Pierre Boaistuau and last six by Bandello. Further volumes appeared 1560, 1568, 1576 and the final two volumes in 1582. He died in 1583.

introduced the moral to be found in each tale, and instructed the reader as they travelled through each paragraph, so too did Goulart, constantly aware that the reader needed his expert help and guidance. In one other obvious manner, Belleforest and Goulart are similar: both were devoutly religious men, convinced by the overwhelming power and omnipotence of God, although Belleforest was never a cleric. The power of God over the human world was immense, affecting our daily existence. As the tales indicate, God had the power to intervene and alter the course of events, often with devastating consequences. Both Goulart and Belleforest had similar moral concerns: clandestine marriage, adultery and child rearing, were principal concerns. Both shared the same sense of moral direction and purposeful determination.

The Histoires Tragiques, like the Histoires Admirables, had a significant impact in England, a fact made clear by Shakespeare's repeated use of this text. In the hands of the Englishman, William Painter, the Histoires Tragiques was transformed through his emphasis on the importance of both entertainment and edification. It was an extremely accurate and faithful translation, known in English as The Palace of Pleasure. In the preface to his translation Painter wrote,

Nothing in mine opinion can be more acceptable vnto thee...than often reading and pursuing of varietie of hystories, which as they be for diversitie of matter pleasant and plausible, even so for example and imitation good and commendable.<sup>76</sup>

Here, like Goulart, entertainment and edification are placed side by side, but the moral of the tale remained a paramount concern. Here, using only one

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<sup>76</sup> Frank S. Hook. 'The French Bandello', 22-23 (1948-50), p.11.

example from Painter, his purpose becomes clear. Like Plutarch and many subsequent authors, moralists condemned women who did not breastfeed their own children, preferring instead the use of wet nurses. Painter is an outspoken critic, condemning all such mothers, except those who were forced to relinquish their maternal responsibilities due to illness. Painter, like other contemporaries, believed that the children developed the moral qualities of the woman who suckled them, and as a consequence, no mother could be certain that a wet nurse was of a good character, sober and wise. As we would expect, the tale concludes with a moralising aside by Painter, detailing the type of wet nurse who would prove acceptable, again warning against the corruption of the infant.<sup>78</sup> The layout of this particular tale is not exceptional; a similar style is manifest in Goulart's tales as well as those of Philip Camerarius, to name only two. It is clear, even from the few examples given above, these contemporary writers, with the single exception of Bandello, used the medium of entertaining tales in order to educate their readers and ultimately reform behaviour.

One additional contemporary, Pierre Boaistuau, shared much in common with Goulart's style and purpose in the Histoires Admirables. Boaistuau was a prolific and exceptionally popular writer. Two of his most celebrated works concern us here: his Theatre of the World and Certain Secret Wonders of Nature. In his Theatre of the World, already quoted above, entertainment and education are once more tightly meshed. The same types of stories are included, concerning matters such as clandestine marriage, warnings of corruption and greed, injustice, childbirth, vanity and adultery, subject areas familiar from Goulart's Histoires

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<sup>77</sup> Painter, Palace of Pleasure, Preface

Admirables. Unlike Goulart, however, classical and contemporary references are blended together.

In his Theatre of the World Boaistuau, like Goulart, sought out numerous examples in order to teach and instruct future generations. Indeed, the word theatre was used in the title because in Roman times news of great importance was announced in the theatre. This makes clear the work's moralising and instructive nature. Again, the work is grouped around general themes, familiar from the Histoires Admirables. Further, as with Goulart, Beard and Belleforest, Boaistuau emphasised the omnipotence of God, and the power of his intervention in the human world. As Boaistuau wrote, 'A thing miraculous wherein God doth show himself a just and righteous judge...' Even beasts would be forced to bow down to his power and authority.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, there can be no doubt that the writers and their works which have already been discussed were deeply concerned that injustice and immorality were rampant in society. Goulart considered that immorality was the norm, and that human kind was simply unwilling to take the time and the effort to alter their behaviour. Likewise, Boaistuau complained that the world was enveloped in errors, 'We may now well saye that the sheepfold is open...the wolves are elected and the sheepe are dispensed and gone forth...'. Once corrupted, the death of the soul was inevitable.<sup>80</sup>

In his Certain Secret Wonders of Nature, Boaistuau concentrated on a theme which clearly fascinated Goulart: the consequences of nature gone wrong.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, sig.Giiivff.

Boaistuau, like Goulart, Paré and many others before them, considered that God's will could be best understood when the unnatural was studied. Even the most hideous creatures, it was believed, were all part of God's great design, a physical sign of his presence in the world. The unnatural did not simply mean the monsters, but also violent and destructive storms, comets, eclipses of the sun and moon, war and extreme human behaviour, such as murder and theft. These types of examples were integral to the Histoires Admirables. Such observations and collections had become more than a literary conceit.

This theme was taken still further by Amboise Paré in his work On Monsters and Marvels. Paré considered many examples, in particular concentrating on warnings from the human and animal world. Indeed, Paré claimed that he had actually seen many of these monsters himself. Although this work will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four, of importance here is Paré's self-confessed reason for publishing this controversial work. In his introduction Paré made clear that this book was to be both instructive and entertaining. In the conclusion to many of the tales, a moral reason is frequently given for the birth of a monster. For example, the birth of a monstrous child was often the consequence of the immorality of one of the partners. One example, cited by Paré, was the birth of a monstrous child in 1493, the consequence of his mother having had sex with an animal. The child was half man, half beast.<sup>81</sup> Like Goulart, Paré was preoccupied with the extraordinary, of unusual celestial phenomena and other signs of God's warning to humankind. Both Paré's work On Monsters and Marvels as well as the Histoires Admirables, the same methods are used to

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<sup>79</sup> Boaistuau, Theatre of the World, p.38f.

describe many of the same unnatural and unusual phenomenon. Paré considered and debated many of the same moral issues as Goulart. It was a source used with great alacrity by Goulart in the Histoires Admirables, doubtless because of the interests which they were able to share, despite their religious differences.

### **Between Fiction and Fact**

Whilst it is clear that these collections had a dual purpose, both moral and entertaining, it is also necessary to investigate the nature of the actual tales included. In Goulart's Histoires Admirables a seemingly eclectic gathering of tales does, in fact, form an overall coherent impression. Tales that can seem somewhat banal and pointless, in effect reveal the overwhelming power of God over the human world. One story, for example, depicts a prince who ordered that all his servants should be buried with him following his own death. At first glance this might seem a purposeless tale, without any moral depth. In fact, however, Goulart guides the reader, leading them towards the intended moral. In the conclusion to this tale Goulart asserts that, 'le n'ay gueres veu de vanité si perseuerance'.<sup>82</sup> This tale, it is clear, illustrates several important moral precepts: beyond one man's excessive vanity, an individual's overestimation of his self-worth and self-importance is made apparent. Without this instruction a reader might easily miss the intended moral of the tale. Sometimes Goulart indicates this in the title or introduction. For example, 'Ialovsie horrible', a title which is informative enough that the instructional value of the proceeding tale is

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p.141.

<sup>81</sup> Amboise Paré, Des monstres et prodigies (London, 1982) p.67.

<sup>82</sup> Goulart, Histoires Admirables, vols. 1 & 2, p.41.



immediately apparent.<sup>83</sup> Through these devices Goulart constantly draws the reader's attention towards the aspects of the tale which he considered most important.

In many tales, however, the moral is much less obscure. There are, for example, numerous stories concerned with adultery, murder and justice, and in such incidents the ethical intent is glaringly obvious. Of course this agenda would have been a familiar one, drawing on already popular tales. A further popular agenda in the Histoires Admirables is the use of supposedly historical incidents in order to illustrate a particular moral, stories often culled from numerous 'historical' works. Once again, unlike many of his contemporaries, Goulart only sought examples from his recent past. In the fourth volume of the Histoires Admirables, for example, Goulart opens this work with a detailed account of the siege of Sancerre, clearly an historical account designed to bolster the determination of the now flagging Huguenot cause.<sup>84</sup> It was a retelling of a popular tale in order to reveal the bravery of the Huguenots in the face of terrible adversity and privation. Of course, this tale also has great value as a piece of entertainment, not least with its various incidents of cannibalism, the sense of heightened tension as the people of Sancerre gradually ran out of food, and were reduced to eating rats, cats and eventually people. As the tale continues the bravery and fortitude of even the children in the town is emphasised, all being given a sense of righteousness and moral rectitude in the midst of their suffering. A boy of ten, on the point of death, comforted his parents in their grief at the loss of their child. He states that he died by the will of God and that they should be thankful, perhaps a sign that he was

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p.253.

indeed one of the elect, dying so humbly for his faith. It was an example drawn straight from the Huguenot historical annals, a tale repeated many times over.

Fact and fiction are so carefully woven together that it is almost impossible to distinguish one from the other. As if to emphasise the young boy's faith, the author stated that Lazarus had suffered the privations of starvation and had died as a consequence. Eventually, despite the deaths of thousands, the siege was lifted: whilst the people of Sancerre were forced to move they could at least be proud that their city remained standing, a sign of defiance and righteousness in the face of adversity.<sup>85</sup> It is clear from the tale above, as well as from many other supposedly historical episodes, that nothing happened by chance. At all times God was near, guiding the path of history. Even the death of a young boy became a symbol of the power of God over life and death. Of course, Goulart's name will be forever associated with the writing of a popular brand of Protestant history which, by and large, depended upon the recent past of the Reformed. Above all, however, Goulart will be remembered for his successful continuation of Crepsin's Histoires des martyrs, following Crespin's death in 1572, only weeks before the St. Bartholomew's massacres. Even in this work fact and fiction lie side by side to form a compelling but entertaining and moralising account. Such tales were intended as a source of comfort and hope to an embattled and embittered religion, still suffering great persecution in early seventeenth-century France.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p.752ff. This account was a very faithful rendering of Jean de Lery's own account of the siege of Sancerre. This account had been used earlier by Goulart in the Histoires des Martyrs.

<sup>85</sup> Goulart, Histoires Admirables, vol.3 & 4, p.455ff.

Beyond such obviously historical tales, Goulart was also deeply concerned with the apparent power of the devil within society. Whilst many cases of witchcraft were considered problematical by Goulart, the power of the devil and the reality of diabolism remained a constant threat for him. Indeed, the devil was believed to be ready to prey on unsuspecting people at all times. His power and influence were ubiquitous. In Goulart's tales, the battle between humankind and the devil remained perpetual, the two locked in an eternal battle for supremacy. There are a vast number of such tales in this work. In almost all tales where a human made a pact with the devil the consequences were devastating. In one tale, for example, the warning was clear: a mother, angry with her son, swore that he would go to the devil. Suddenly in front of her, the child vanished. A long search proved fruitless. Several hours later his parents heard shouting from the boy's bedroom. His clothes were torn, and his body bruised and scratched. When questioned, the boy explained that several badly dressed men had lifted him up and dropped him onto a mountain of thorns. The moral of the tale is clear. Firstly, that the mother should never have made a pact with the devil. Her sin was particularly reprehensible because she had taken her anger out on her son. Secondly, the boy should not have driven his mother to such anger in the first instance. Finally, the young boy redeemed himself: as he stated at the end of his tale, he was certain that the men would have killed him had he not recommended himself to God. This, Goulart leads us to believe, is the ultimate moral of the tale. Individuals had to be vigilant, aware of the potential danger at all times.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Goulart had already published, on several occasions, an account of the siege of Sancerre, in his various works on the history of France including his Memoires de l'estat de France sous Charles Neuf

<sup>87</sup> Goulart, Histoires Admirables, vols. 3 & 4, p.323.

There are many similar examples, each making apparent the constant battle between God and the devil, played out in the hearts and minds of humankind. For Goulart the power of the devil was a frightening reality, even if many of the examples used by him in the Histoires Admirables were fictionalised. For Goulart, blurring fact and fiction did not detract from the apparent moralising significance of the tale. A final example again emphasises the mingling of fact and fiction. In this tale a minister from Saxony, Laurence Toner, was approached by the devil, forced to listen to his vile blasphemies. In fear and horror the minister used the most powerful of all weapons, the might of the Bible. Not surprisingly, the devil was powerless in the face of God's word and fled, 'Toner lui resiste, & le refute si courageusement par tesmoignages formels recueillis de l'Ecriture sainte, que ce malheureux esprit tout coufus, laissant la place infectee de puanteur insupportable s'esuanouit'.<sup>88</sup> Once again, the power of a fundamental and unwavering belief in God was the only way in which the devil could be defeated. However powerful the devil might appear, it could never match the strength of God. In his concern over the real power of the devil within society, Goulart touched a raw nerve. It was widely believed during this period that humankind had succumbed to the frenzied might of the devil. Many believed that if mankind did not repent and reform the devil's powers would be unleashed. As it was, the power of the devil was only just contained. The devil is constantly represented as a powerful and tangible force in the human world, caught in a perpetual struggle with God for dominance over the souls of mankind. Man's only defence was his belief in God.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p.46.

### Faith in the 'Histoires Admirables'

God's omnipotence and omnipresence was another major theme in the Histoires Admirables. Goulart repeatedly emphasised the presence of God, his influence and effect on our everyday lives, as well as over the general course of history. It is, therefore, somewhat surprising that in the Histoires Admirables Goulart rarely made overt religious statements.<sup>89</sup> One exception to this is the tale of a woman unable to feed her children, following the death of her husband. Never losing her faith in God, she went to a holy fountain, and prayed to God for his help and guidance. Suddenly, a man appeared and questioned her faith, asking the woman if she had found any food at the fountain and whether she believed God would really be able to offer any help. As if giving a stock reply, the woman answered that nothing was impossible for God. The man told the woman to return home, reminding her to keep faith with God. The woman, unquestioning and certain in her faith returned home, discovering on her return sufficient food to feed her children for many months to come. God had answered her prayers in a direct and tangible way. Of course, as Goulart indicates at the close of the tale this man was an angel, an agent of God, sent to answer the prayers of a faithful and honest woman.<sup>90</sup> God had rewarded a simple act of piety.

A second example is even more dogmatic and telling, a tale which develops sermon-like, describing the importance and significance of election. The story itself becomes of secondary importance; the moralising intention of the tale

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<sup>89</sup> There are, of course, examples of blasphemers punished, including the memorable demise of a preacher who claimed that parts of the Bible were wrong. Inevitably, he died as a consequences, 'L'an mil cinq cens trente-six, certain prescheur ayant osé en plein sermon dire que l'Apostre S. Paul s'estoit abusé en quelques ensroits, fut frappé sur l'heure en sa chaire, & mourut soudainement'. See Goulart, Histoires Admirables, vol. 1 & 2, p.637.

predominates. In the entire four volumes of this work, this description of election is the only example of a distinctly Reformed perspective. This is a striking deviation: Goulart's normal approach was peculiarly non-confessional, an approach which sets him apart from the likes of Thomas Beard and Philip Camerarius, both of whom were significantly more dogmatic in their propagation of the Protestant faith. At first, this story begins like any other, but in fact develops into a powerful assertion of faith and election.

At the end of 1545 a rich and learned advocate from Padua called Francis Spierra was haunted by his guilty conscience. Spierra, convinced that he was condemned to hell, believed that invisible voices confirmed his self-analysis, 'Car...il voyoit clairement deuant ses yeux tous les tourmens, toutes les peines des enfers & des danez, & oyoit des sentences redoutables en son ame, tiré deuant le siege iuducial de Iesus Christ'<sup>91</sup>. The man was certain that he would have to face God's eternal vengeance, '...qu'il declaroit de sens rassi qu'il voyoit la vengence de Dieu eternal apareillee manifestement contre le peché qu'il auoit commis'.<sup>92</sup> Such was his belief, that he no longer even considered God as his father, but rather an adversary, the price he had to pay for his sinful and wicked life, 'Sa response fut qu'il auoit peché contre le S. Esprit: peché si grand, qu'il est peché à la mort, c'est à dire astringé à la vengeance eternelle de Dieu, & aux peines d'enfer'<sup>93</sup> His sins were of such enormity, Goulart warns, that he was no longer worthy of God's protection and love, a privilege given only to the faithful,

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<sup>90</sup> Goulart, *Histoires Admirables*, vol. 3 & 4, p.131f.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, p.164.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p.165.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, p.166.

...quant aux passages, qui lui estoyent lleguez, touchant l'affection misericordieuse de Dieu le Pere à cause de son fils Iesus-Christ reputoit ses freres & membres: mais quant à lui, qu'il auoit renoncé ceste amité, & de son propre reietté tout alliance fraternelle:& qu'il n'ignoroit point en combien grande tranquillité & repos d'esprit pouuoient estre ceux qui auoyent vne fois embrassé les promesses de salut, & se reposoyent incessamment en icelles.<sup>94</sup>

Whilst the man prayed that his sins would be forgiven, he remained fully aware that this was impossible; only the elect, he asserts, had this right, 'Protestoit auoir est quelquefois en ceste pensee, que ses pechez estoyent cachez, & qu'il n'en pourroit estre puni: pource que Christ auoit satisfait pour iceux: mais pour lors il conoissoit trop tard que ces choses appartenoyent aux esleus de Dieu, and entre les pechez desquels & le throne celeste, Iesus Christ met son sang precieux...' <sup>95</sup> Not surprisingly, the man died in despair, aware that his own sins had led to his final downfall. This is an exceptionally detailed and informative statement of faith. It highlights the moralising and instructional tendency of Goulart's writings, and providing a warning as well as an explanation, a statement of belief as well as a simple explanation of faith and election.

Goulart's interests extended far beyond this purpose, several examples of which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters. Many tales described the extraordinary ability of people who appeared never to eat or drink, and yet remained alive. Some were exposed as frauds, emphasising the remarkable nature of the rest. There are also numerous tales highlighting the weird and wonderful

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p.167.



foodstuffs demanded by pregnant women. Even more fascinating are the many tales of supposedly miraculous phenomena, such as celestial signs, devastating storms, terrifying monsters and even hermaphrodites. All reveal the dangers inherent in the world when nature becomes perverted and turns upon itself. Only by studying these malfunctions within society can we begin to understand the overwhelming and breathtaking wonders of the natural world and their perfection.

### Style

Beyond the content of the works themselves, the style of the tales is as important as their content. In some respects, Goulart's tales had much in common with the broadsheets, canards and occasionels of his day.<sup>96</sup> All the elements of a successful canard appear in these tales. The canard, like the placard, was a simple and familiar literary device. Typically only one page in length, printed commentary and illustration were juxtaposed, one explaining the other. The usual content of such works are those found in the pages of the Histoires Admirables. These were memorable and spectacular events, such as a comets, floods, miscarriages of justice, notorious murders, prodigious births, monsters and so on. As in the Histoires Admirables these tales were met with terror, fascination, entertainment as well as edification. Whilst there can be no doubt that Goulart obtained the majority of his sources from well known contemporary books, there remains the possibility that the origin of at least some of these works could have

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p.170.

<sup>96</sup> See for example Roger Chartier (ed.), The Culture and Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Oxford, 1989) and Henri-Jean Martin, Religion, Absolutism and Readership, 1585 - 1715, trans. Paul and Nadine Saengir (Baltimore, 1996).

been canards. Tales, such as the ones which appeared on the canard, were often popularised renderings, but were not designed exclusively for one particular class or market. Many were intended to be read aloud. During this period, stories tended to appear in several different forms and different types of work, ensuring a fluid movement up and down the social scale. In this respect, the divisions often made between elite and popular culture become spurious. The tales remained remarkably similar, whether in Goulart's expensive volumes, or in penny canards.

Even more striking, is the similarity in style between these canards and Goulart's Histoires Admirables. The occasionels were typically longer than a placard, often short pamphlets, but with the same remarkable number of subjects as the canard. In the occasionel the author went into great detail over time, place and names, giving a 'factual' base to the tale in an attempt to add greater credibility. As with Goulart's tales, the stories told in the occasionel were intended to give a plurality of meanings; the writer often directed the reader to the moral of the tale in his conclusion. Once again, fiction is clearly presented as moralising fact. Whilst every attempt is made to present the tale as fact, adding, for example, dates, exact geographical locations and detailed names of the protagonists, it is apparent that fact and fiction merge.

Many of the tales in the Histoires Admirables follow this same pattern. For example, one tale related the exact date, month and year as well as the place where a terrible storm took place. Goulart tells us that on 13 August 1559 in Germany, during a horrendous storm, a woman, with her four sons and their maid

hid in a stove.<sup>97</sup> This detail, as well as apparently quoting the exact words of the woman, was a common literary device, frequently used in the canards. Assertions attesting the veracity of the tale were also common features of the canards, a device which appeared several times in the Histoires Admirables and other contemporary works. Goulart himself claimed that he was in a position where he could personally inform the reader that a tale was legitimate because he had personally interviewed the author of the tale. Goulart claims that a man who had travelled to Cairo had personally related the following tale to him. This does not, of course, add to the veracity of the tale. Apparently this man, one Estienne Duplais, had travelled to Cairo and, on a barren mountainside, seen the bodies of long dead Christians rise from their grave, slaughtered whilst at prayer. He wrote, 'Voila le sommaire du discours d'Estienne du Plais, par lui confirmé & renouellé à la fin d'Auril 1600 que ie descriuois ceste histoire...' <sup>98</sup> Doubtless with the massacres of St. Bartholomew in mind, Goulart was led to believe that they were the bodies of massacred Christians. Adding to his claim of veracity, Goulart adds that this same phenomena had already been confirmed by Martin Baumgarten, another contemporary writer.

It would seem likely that Goulart's Histoires Admirables followed a distinct and exceptionally popular style, imitating the occasionels. Indeed, it is not impossible that some of his tales were common to both his books as well as the occasionels. As Roger Chartier writes, 'To a greater extent than has been thought, widely distributed texts and books crossed social boundaries and drew readers from very

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p.137f.

<sup>98</sup> p.42.

different social and economic levels'.<sup>99</sup> It would seem clear, therefore, that the tales collected in the Histoires Admirables were not necessarily the preserve of an elite class, able to afford both time and money to buy these expensive volumes, as well as possessing the ability to read. Goulart cleverly developed an already familiar concept and style. His audience would have been familiar with the mixture of entertainment and edification, as well as the style and format of the tale. Goulart constantly sought to make books available to a vernacular reading and speaking audience, spending many years of his life translating some of the greatest works of his time, in both classical and contemporary languages, into French. Despite this, no evidence remains which would give us a deeper insight into Goulart's readership. Like Beza, Goulart believed that books should be studied and understood because they held intrinsic values relevant to the society in which they lived.

One famous example from France aptly illustrates the style and genre of these works. This occasionel centred around a hanged woman who was miraculously saved. Many of the techniques, familiar from Goulart's Histoires Admirables, appear in this story. Just as many of the tales from the Histoires Admirables had numerous reincarnations in different books, so too the tales in the occasionels were often reprinted. For example, the occasionel concerning the hanged woman appeared on the presses of at least two different printers. A first edition was printed in Douai by the widow of Jacques Boscard, whilst a second edition was printed by Jean Bogat, again in Douai. A third edition was also probably printed, this time in Paris. As with Goulart's tales, this particular occasionel sought to

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<sup>99</sup> Chartier, The Culture of Print, p.4.

express not only the omnipotence of God, but also the power of the saints and the Eucharist. Not surprisingly this was a distinctly Catholic work, relating the tale of a serving girl called Anne Bethimer, who worked at the Pewter Pot Inn, between Nantes and Rennes. She was falsely accused of murdering her baby and sentenced to death. It transpired, not surprisingly, that the girl was innocent, and the baby that of her master's daughter. Before she was hanged the girl made her peace with God and invoked the mercy of the saints. Several days later it was clear that the girl was not in fact dead, as she was released and the truth established at last. Whilst the invocation of the saints would never appear in the Histoires Admirables, the conclusion would not have been out of place. The author concluded that, 'This miracle can serve as an example and a mirror to the administrators of justice to make it clear to them that they must take care not to condemn a criminal to death lightly when someone comes before them...if they wish to discharge their conscience well....'<sup>100</sup> Indeed, this notion of justice and retribution was one of the most frequently used in the Histoires Admirables. It would seem that both the style and content of the Histoires Admirables owed much to popular and cheap occasionels produced throughout France during this period.

Whilst the Histoires Admirable might not have a unique agenda, what is remarkable is the breadth and scale of Goulart's achievements. In so-doing the Histoires Admirables is a rich and vibrant document, augmenting our knowledge of both his contemporary social and literary milieu. His mastery of source material is outstanding, whilst sharing with his contemporaries a sense of awe

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p.63.

and achievement of the world in which they lived and worked. The Histoires Admirables is a fascinating document, eliciting a great deal of interesting detail regarding the moral and religious situation in which he lived and worked. As will be seen in the following chapter, Goulart's Histoires Admirables can only be understood within his contemporary context, judged against the values of his age.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### THE PREACHING OF MORALITY

#### Introduction

From pulpit to printed book a common refrain in the decades around 1600 was apparent: the moral degeneration of society was a reality. Whilst such denunciations were not unique to this period, the level of condemnation is striking. Certainly these views were exaggerated and a distortion of the truth, but these opinions dominate much contemporary thought. Complaints were heard that adultery and fornication were rife; the institute of marriage no longer respected; drunkenness, gambling and lechery thrived; children no longer showed deference to their elders, whilst dress was immodest and lewd. From this pessimistic stance little appeared to have changed since the beginning of the Reformation.<sup>101</sup> If we are guided by contemporary moralists, it is clear that the very heart of society, the family, was in a state of collapse.<sup>102</sup>

The pastors in Geneva were by no means alone in their condemnation of moral disorder.<sup>103</sup> Goulart's position as a pastor in Geneva provided both the reason for

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<sup>101</sup> The Registres are particularly revealing. It is clear that the same moral concerns were debated well into the seventeenth-century. From their point of view nothing had changed. In the introduction to the fourth volume of the Registres it was asserted, 'Ils s'enforment de maintenir la pure doctrine de l'Evangile et se montrent d'un extrême vigilance en matière de mœurs et notamment des les case de divorces au de mariage contraires aux ordonances...' See Registres, vol.iv, p.ix.

<sup>102</sup> Indeed, over fifty years before Goulart wrote the first volume of the Histoires Admirables Calvin himself discussed these same moral issues in his Institutes of the Christian Religion. In a powerful attack he condemned adultery, 'For we see how the Lord...charges with frightful punishments this sort of arrogance and contempt of his gifts'. See Tony Lee and Hilary Osborne (eds), Institutes of the Christian Religion (London, 1986)

<sup>103</sup> Some of the best secondary literature includes Raymond Menzter (ed.), Sin and the Calvinists (Kirkville, Mass., 1994); Philip Benedict, The Huguenot Population of France, 1600 - 1685. The Demographic Fate and Customs of a Religious Minority (Philadelphia, 1994); Jean-Louis Flandrin,



his great concern for morality, as well as giving him the opportunity to take a very public stance against such behaviour. Nor was this a peculiarly Reformed consideration. The Catholic church and civil authorities had long battled with these same problems. Throughout the long sixteenth-century ecclesiastical and civil authorities legislated against and condemned a wide range of conduct. We need only consider the vast legislative output in France on these same issues to be aware of the scale of the task: successive monarchs struggled to find new solutions for exactly the same problems.<sup>104</sup> The debate which raged over immorality, as they perceived it, was the central concern. Seen through the work of Simon Goulart a more personal context can be given to an exceptionally wide ranging and long-running debate.

Whilst Goulart's views are largely derivative, a reality true to so much of his work, the extent to which he campaigned against immorality is exceptional. On several occasions he risked his freedom and his career in his outspoken views against immorality. From the highest echelons of society to the poorest inhabitants of Geneva, Goulart was relentless in his condemnation. Goulart is such a remarkable figure because he closely associated his outrage of immorality with contemporary people and events. His attacks were, in many cases, far from general: his criticisms were deliberately deeply personal. For Goulart the attack against immorality was closely linked with his second preoccupation, history. As will be discussed later, in many of his historical works the issue of moral behaviour is closely associated with the fate of the Reformed. Goulart was not

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Families in Former Times, trans. Richard Southern (Cambridge, 1979) and R. Po-Chia Hsia, The German People and the Reformation.

<sup>104</sup> Sarah Hanley, 'Engendering the State: Family Formations and State Building in Early Modern France', in French Historical Studies, vol.16, no.1, 1989, 4-27.

afraid to berate all types of behaviour in Geneva, whether this be lewd clothing, dancing, drinking or sexual behaviour. Even his own daughter was not given his protection when she was reprimanded for dancing at a wedding. Above all, morality was a guiding force in his life. For Goulart, the Reformed faith provided a set of guidelines through which everyday should be lived. It was the central preoccupation of both his life and his writings.

### **Morality: The Issues**

Simon Goulart's focus was dominated by his preoccupation of behaviour within the family, essentially what we would now consider private and not public concerns. In the Histoires Admirables he considered morality and discipline in general, giving particular emphasis to marriage and the family. The family, and more particularly the institution of marriage, were the essential building blocks of society, religion and moral change. Beyond this he called for further changes in personal behaviour, including the eradication of drinking, gambling, dancing and inappropriate dress. Such activities were not only morally dubious, but threatened to undermine the foundation of a godly society, were offensive to God and against the teachings of the church. Ultimately, as Goulart makes clear, the individual was guilty of committing both a sin and a crime, punishable by both church and state.

From betrothal to marriage, from pregnancy to child rearing, the family was increasingly highly regulated by both church and state. Their apparent lack of success stands in stark contrast to their constant attempts to reform behaviour. Appropriate conduct was determined, and any deviation had to be condemned

and corrected. Clandestine marriage was frequently singled out and condemned. The fear that such liaisons were immature, without parental consent and could lead to bigamy were frequently voiced concerns.<sup>105</sup> Adultery, the most serious of all marital sins, was strenuously proscribed. Even the most intimate aspects of married life were, at least in theory, highly regulated. Every aspect of married and family life came under scrutiny.

The primary purpose of marriage remained the procreation of children. Both religious and secular advice was on hand. Numerous books were written indicating the ways in which children should be educated, disciplined and reared within the family.<sup>106</sup> But the relationship was two-way: parents had defined responsibilities towards their offspring, whilst the children themselves were expected to fulfil their obligations towards their kin. A significant part of the Histoires Admirables is devoted to the terrible consequences when this carefully balanced relationship failed. If the family is on the brink of collapse, Goulart posited, what hope is there for society in general? One of the greatest fears indicated by contemporary writers were grown-up children who refused help to their aged and infirm parents. Goulart presents several such tales.<sup>107</sup> Nor was this a mere literary device: local councils were left to deal with many parents refused help by their children and left begging on the streets, or forced to rely upon the charity of a local hospital. Others still were clearly the victims of physical and

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<sup>105</sup> See Ibid, as well as various contemporary works. The best known example is Jean de Coras' Paraphrase svr l'edict des mariages clandestinement contractez par les enfans de famille, contre le gré & consentement de leurs peres & meres (Paris, 1572).

<sup>106</sup> From the fifteenth century onwards several well-known works were written which offered advice to families. Many of these were, in fact, medical works on obstetrics. Most famous of all was Eucharius Rosslin's Rosengarten, a work which remained popular throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

<sup>107</sup> See Goulart, Histoires Admirables, vols. 1 & 2, pp.261f and 218f.

mental abuse.<sup>108</sup> Goulart presents us with tragic warnings from the past, warning that we should reform our behaviour or suffer Godly outrage. In his works, therefore, Goulart is more than a writer of entertaining stories: he has become a social commentator. Despite Goulart's claims, as well as the claims of other contemporary writers, there is actually little evidence to suggest that immoral behaviour had increased. There was, however, a rising crescendo against this perceived rise in immorality.

In an overwhelmingly patriarchal society the head of the household was, of course, the husband and father. Despite the despotic tendencies of this position, both husband and father had clearly defined duties towards his family. Above all, he had to provide for their material and intellectual welfare: he was responsible for their food, their clothing and their education. Even servants fell under this remit.<sup>109</sup> As Goulart states, the husband who would not work, who drank too much or in any other way failed to provide for his children would be severely punished.<sup>110</sup> As the humanists argued, a man who could not provide and care for his own family was certainly not capable of asserting his authority within the state. Once more, this highlights the intimate connection between public and private life. Whilst customary law did not forbid a man to hit his wife, excessive and continual physical abuse was certainly condemned by the consistory.<sup>111</sup> In

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<sup>108</sup> This obviously led to a significant extra burden for local councils, many of whom were struggling to deal with vagrants, the unemployed and the disabled. The intention, then as now, was that families should look after their own elderly as best as possible. It was a personal and not a state responsibility.

<sup>109</sup> As early as 1528 Justus Menius asserted, 'A husband has two functions: first, he should rule over his wife, children and servants and be head and master of the entire household; second, he should work and produce enough to support and feed his household'. See Scott Hendrix, 'Masculinity and Patriarchy in Reformation Germany' in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 55 (1995), pp.177 - 193 at p.177.

<sup>110</sup> See Goulart, *Histoires Admirables*, vols. 1 & 2, p.106 for example where he stated '...il despescha aussi ses enfans, alleguant qu'il ne vouloit point auoir d'enfans qui fussent nommez enfans de putain'.

<sup>111</sup> As Calvin stressed in his sermons, ultimately a husband should treat the life of his wife as more precious than his own. This, despite the fact, that little action was taken against all but the worst acts of

particular, physical abuse was condemned during pregnancy.<sup>112</sup> In Germany the law was so severe that a husband who hit his wife, causing the miscarriage of their child, could find himself charged with murder. A father could also be reprimanded if he proved negligent in his duty of education, in particular religious instruction. Each child had to be instilled with the values of their society, to ensure that they became model citizens, individuals who would place the needs of the state before their own. These values had to be learned, at least initially, in the home. As Goulart is at pains to indicate there was no greater fear than a society in which citizens put themselves before their country. As Heinz Schilling has stated, 'Marriage, family and child rearing were at the very heart of this process of elementary social change'.<sup>113</sup> The family was, after all, the fundamental building block of society.<sup>114</sup>

In many respects, through his discussion of these issues, Goulart forms part of a familiar and well-worn agenda. But, in several ways, Goulart went further than his contemporaries; whilst his tales might seem comfortingly familiar, in his capacity as minister he was a sharp and severe critic when faced with moral failings, even at the highest levels of society. One incident in particular almost cost him his position in Geneva. In public, Goulart criticised the former Huguenot leader and now French king, Henry IV, of conducting an immoral and adulterous affair with a woman called Gabrielle d'Estrées, acknowledged as his mistress. It

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male violence against their partners. On Calvin's marriage sermons see Marie Baldwin, Marriage in Calvin's Sermons, 121 - 129, see p.128.

<sup>112</sup> At the sixth national synod of the French church held in 1567 the synod decreed that even an incompatible couple should be admonished to live together, not to live separate lives. Even in extreme circumstances the husband would only be reprimanded by the consistory and order to live in a more fitting manner. See John Quick, Synodicon in Gallia Reformatia: Or The Acts, Decisions, Decrees and Canons of Those Famous National Council of the Reformed Churches in France (London, 1692), p.85

<sup>113</sup> Heinz Schilling, 'Reform and Supervision of Family Life in Germany and the Netherlands' in Raymond Mentzer(ed.), Sin and the Calvinists (Kirsville, Missouri, 1994) p.16.

was this adulterous liaison which led to Goulart's criticisms. Not only did he censure the king verbally, but in one of his most popular works he criticised the sovereign and his court in print. In a letter to Joseph-Juste Scaliger, dated 5 December 1600, Goulart was openly critical of the immoral behaviour of the king. He wrote, 'Le Roy logé envrion douze jours a Levisés un petit village...Mais n'a parlé a aucun iceaux à part tous ses propos opine esté communs, & en presence de courtisans'.<sup>115</sup> Goulart, not surprisingly, was forced to back down, but would only do so after being threatened with a brief jail sentence. Geneva simply could not afford to isolate the French government still further with an unprecedented public attack against the morality of a king. He strenuously believed that the French court was a hotbed of immorality. Doubtless this permissiveness seeped through to the rest of society, setting as it did an extremely bad example. In one of his most popular works, the Recueil de choses memorables, Goulart's sense of moral outrage against the court was pointed. He wrote, 'Le reste de toute ceste annee fut presque employé entre les courtisans, en nopces, festine & autres passetemps. Mais parmi le Royaume il y auoit de grandes despardes'.<sup>116</sup> It is clear that Goulart believed that the elite should set standards which their subjects could follow. In his translation of Plutarch, Les oeuvres morales et meslees, Goulart gave the explicit warning that the moral behaviour of the ordinary people in the kingdom was dependent upon the behaviour of the monarch. If a ruler commanded with justice and integrity his citizens would follow. By contrast, if he was ignorant, violent and unjust, immorality would follow. He wrote, '...comme au contraire aussi, depuis il est

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid, p.16f.

<sup>115</sup> Leonard Chester Jones, Simon Goulart (Geneva, 1917), p.398.

<sup>116</sup> Simon Goulart discusses this in his Recueil des choses memorables aveunues en France sous le regne de Henri II, François II, Charles IX, Henri III et Henri IV.... (Leiden, 1602), p.304.



ignorant & vicieux, il espond la contagion du vice & de l'ignorance par toutes les provinces de son obseissance...'<sup>117</sup> Only a ruler who displayed true wisdom was blessed by God.<sup>118</sup> An astute reader cannot fail to miss Goulart's indication that this immoral behaviour in court served only to ensure the moral and physical decline of France during the civil wars. Clearly, despite his necessary self-imposed exile, Goulart, like many of his French comrades in Geneva, continued to remain resolutely patriotic to their country.

On several other occasions, Goulart's critical stance against morality became apparent. Following a lavish celebration in the city, Goulart and Beza refused communion to those who had attended because of their immoral dress and behaviour. Once again Goulart was forced to retract his stance and ignominiously back down.<sup>119</sup> For many, Goulart demanded a reformation of behaviour unacceptable to, and unpractised by, many of the Reformed. Even Beza's niece was charged with adultery in 1570, despite her pleas of innocence. Beza strongly believed that the council had used his niece as a backhanded way of attacking him. Not surprisingly, Goulart was constantly concerned that none of his large family came under public scrutiny. More worryingly, however, the whole case indicated the lengths to which supposed misconduct in an individual's private life could be used as a political weapon.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>117</sup> Simon Goulart, *Les oeuvres morales et meslees de Plutarque de Cherone* (Lyons, 1611). p.4f.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, p.8.

<sup>119</sup> Before the celebrations had taken place the company had called for celebrations which were '...qu'on demeure en toute modestie et mediocrite'. See *Registres*, vol.V, p.viii.

<sup>120</sup> On this affair see the account by Eugene Choisy, *L'État Chrétien* (Paris, 1902), p.40. It would seem that during one of Beza's many absences from Geneva, his niece was brought before the secular authority charged with adultery. Despite her pleas that she was innocent, the man accused of being her lover was banished from Geneva, whilst she was imprisoned for a short time. Even a re-trial failed to establish her innocence and she was forced into a humiliating round of public penance. She never admitted any guilt. Beza vehemently condemned the Company of Pastors for neglecting to protect his



### **Discipline: Institutions and Enforcement**

Doctrinal divisions between Catholic and Protestant had become fixed by the end of the sixteenth century, but on the issues of discipline and moral law enforcement the churches concurred. Although methods of reform and punishment were different, on the issues of moral and social reform the Protestant and Catholic churches shared strikingly similar concerns. Even in war-torn France the Reformed church shared many of the same moral concerns as their principal aggressors, the Catholic state. With the creation of the consistory, however, the Reformed developed a unique institution, designed specifically to enforce moral conduct.<sup>121</sup> Whilst the consistory became a somewhat notorious institution, any tangible impact which the consistory had remains difficult to detect.<sup>122</sup>

Discipline was a central and continuing concern for the Reformed. In a world of religious turmoil and opposing faiths, it became a mark of identification and definition in a hostile environment.<sup>123</sup> In France, in particular, the discipline set the Reformed still further apart from the majority Catholic population. If practised to the letter, the discipline prevented the Reformed from attending many of the time-honoured events of the state, including dances and traditional Catholic

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family, as well as accusing the secular government of fabricating evidence against his niece as a means of attacking his own position in Geneva.

<sup>121</sup> A great many articles have been written on the enforcement of discipline. On the establishment of the Genevan consistory in particular see, for example, R. M. Kingdon, Church and Society in Reformation Europe (London, 1985).

<sup>122</sup> One of the fullest studies on the impact of Calvinist discipline in France remains Jeannine Garrison's Protestants du Midi (Toulouse, 1980).

celebrations.<sup>124</sup> Even by their non-attendance at Catholic churches the Reformed set themselves aside as marked men. Conversion meant far more than a rejection of Catholicism, it was an initiation into a new and in theory radically different religious community.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, inherent within the Reformed faith and culture was an assumption that they were indeed God's elect, an assumption which insinuated that all Catholics were damned, adding still further to the fear and outrage felt towards the Reformed. Long before civil war broke out in France the Reformed had become identifiable members of their local community, individuals who attempted to form their own society within a pre-existing society.

All the leaders of the Reformed movement considered discipline a matter of fundamental importance. Whilst Calvin never made discipline the third mark of the church, Bucer and other church leaders took this step. Discipline was vital, it formed the sinews of the church and was an issue of constant debate and concern.<sup>126</sup> As Lambert Daneau stated in his Epistle of Saint Timothy discipline made up '...the ornaments and jewels of the body of the church, whereby it is attired and without it is no other, than a body naked and without clothing'<sup>127</sup>. Above all, strict adherence to the discipline of the church provided an identifiable framework for the establishment of a new culture, establishing a distinct and

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<sup>123</sup> In this context discipline relates to the actual disciplinary regulations written by and adhered to by each Calvinist church. These regulations were enforced by the consistory, controlled by the pastors and lay elders.

<sup>124</sup> It is striking, therefore, that the 1598 Edict of Nantes ordered total outward conformity. On days of Catholic celebration the Reformed were forbidden to work and their houses had to be decorated in conformity with their Catholic neighbours.

<sup>125</sup> See E. William Monter, *Studies in Genevan Government, 1536 - 1605* (Geneva, 1964), p.216ff

<sup>126</sup> In his *Le Sage Vieillard* Goulart asserted that in part wisdom developed from the proper ordering of church discipline. See p.80.

<sup>127</sup> Lambert Daneau, *The judgements of the right reverand and godly learned man, M. Lambert Daneaus contained in his preface before his commentary upon the just epistle to Timothee* (?), sig. Aiiiv.

potentially powerful institution. Only through discipline could a Christian society be guaranteed.

In effect the consistory in Geneva formed part of the municipal government. Every February, concurrent with elections for the rest of the Genevan government, voting for the lay positions in the consistory took place. Every male citizen in the town had the right to cast a vote. The men who sat on the consistory could be, and were, re-elected several times over. The presiding officer was always one of the four Genevan syndics. Alongside him were two benches: one for the pastors and the other for the elected lay representatives, the elders. As in France, the vast majority of elders tended to come from the upper levels of society, the educated elite. Typically, many were merchants and lawyers – all were councillors.<sup>128</sup> Each elder represented a different area of the town, their prime agenda the enforcement of godly behaviour, whether admonishing an individual in private or sending a report to the consistory. In effect, citizen stood in judgement over citizen. Because the consistory could not impose physical or custodial sentences, exclusion from the community of believers and the performance of public penance were its principal weapons. The effects of excommunication (which in Geneva was only valid until the next quarterly Lord's Supper) should not be underestimated. It was a severe and humiliating sentence, frequently only retracted once public penance had been made; alternatively, it could be extended for an additional quarter. Exclusion from the body of believers was, in effect, the symbolic death of the individual believer within their society. It is striking that in many of Goulart's tales the sinner dies,

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<sup>128</sup> In France, however, each elder nominated their successor with the consent of the community.

deaths which should not be taken literally: it symbolised a moral and spiritual death, their removal from the company of the elect. Above all, however, consistorial power lay in its social make-up. Once again, the traditional leaders of society reaffirmed their position.<sup>129</sup>

In France the consistory learned to exercise leniency, doubtless as a consequence of the wars. The French Reformed church simply could not afford to antagonise and humiliate the faithful during a time of uncertainty and crisis.<sup>130</sup> Both the French and Genevan churches gave advice on the correct enforcement of discipline. It was clearly stated on a number of occasions that sinners, in the first instance, were to be reprimanded by a member of their community. In fact, it was a neighbour's duty to bring pressure to bear on the sinner, and prevent their eternal damnation. Only as a last resort, if no attempt at change had been made, should an elder be informed. During the synod of 1571, for example, elders were warned not to name specific individuals to the consistory unless it was absolutely necessary. Even at this stage the wrongdoer might not be summoned before the consistory: the elder would, instead, visit the individual in their home, and again impress upon them the importance of correct and godly behaviour. Once reasoning had failed, only then would the sinner be subjected to further and more public censure be given.<sup>131</sup> Reprimanding the individual within the home helped maintain a veneer of uniformity within the community and prevented opposition

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<sup>129</sup> This paragraph has relied upon material collected in Robert Kingdon, 'Calvin and the Establishment of Consistory Discipline in Geneva: The Institution and the Men Who Directed It', in Nederlands Archief voor Kergeschiedenis, 70, 1990, 158 - 172.

<sup>130</sup> For information on the discipline of the French church in general and the amendments made during the various meetings of the national synod see John Quick, Synodicon. The belief that sin was also the responsibility of the community was, of course, made clear in the Histoires Admirables. The community which allowed sin to persist would themselves be punished.

<sup>131</sup> See Quick, Synodicon, p.98ff.

to the discipline in the first instance. In practice, this permitted various offences, such as dancing and card playing to be tolerated, at least unofficially, provided that these activities were conducted within the privacy of the home. Ultimately, what mattered in France at least, was the maintenance of the public perception of the Reformed as both a godly and united society.<sup>132</sup> Public repentance was an outward manifestation that all was not well.<sup>133</sup>

Whilst the consistory aimed to control the overall religious life of the community, its priority remained reform and not punishment. The individual was guided towards reform and repentance not least because, as Goulart indicated, whole communities which permitted sinful behaviour were held accountable. There is, however, a constant sense of desperation in Goulart's works: no matter how hard the church tried to change the behaviour of its members, sin could never be eradicated. Man's susceptibility to sin was a constant reminder of the fall of Adam and Eve, an indication of human weakness. Goulart, with his usual pessimistic certainty, believed that reform was possible, but humankind was simply too weak minded. He clearly perceived his congregation suffering under the weight of their individual and collective sin.<sup>134</sup> During the time of the war against Savoy in 1589 Goulart went before the council to complain about the immorality of the Genevans, behaviour which he clearly insinuated had caused the war in the first instance. The Register of the Company of Pastors stated,

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<sup>132</sup> It is significant that the 1598 Edict of Nantes attempted the unification of society through outward shows of conformity. In public, the Reformed were ordered to conform. For example during Catholic festivals, the houses of the Reformed had to be decorated in the appropriate manner. On Sundays, and days of Catholic celebration, the Reformed were forbidden to work. Just as the Reformed sort to offer before the world a unified existence, so too did the new government, at the end of the sixteenth-century, sought to end civil and religious strife by uniting the public behaviour of Protestant and Catholic.

<sup>133</sup> Given the commitment of the Reformed to discipline, it is ironic that Catholics constantly presented the Reformed in France as undisciplined and anarchical.

Mais les miseries de la guerre etaient aussi l'effet de l'ire de Dieu plus que jamais, les pasteurs intervirent devant le conseil pour stigmatiser le comportement des Genevois, cause de tous leurs maux. Ils demandèrent souvent des jours de jeûne et prières extraordinaires pour amener les fidèles à la repentance...<sup>135</sup>

In Goulart's tales, the men and women who sin are punished but are never given the opportunity to recognise and acknowledge their faults. Instead, they are removed from the community whilst their victims become martyrs.

Yet, whilst it was made apparent that many were willing to embrace the doctrinal changes of the church, the reform of behaviour was a far complex and exacting problem. Robert Kingdon has aptly stated that,

Throughout his career as a Reformer of Geneva, Calvin insisted on discipline. He frequently claimed that while the Genevans were willing enough to accept true doctrine they refused to behave in a Christian manner. Even on his death bed he was still complaining...that Geneva was a nation of people who were perverse et meschante<sup>136</sup>.

It would seem that Goulart shared these sentiments with the same vehemence and conviction, not least because of his constant concern that even the most basic moral reforms were ignored by the Reformed.<sup>137</sup> It was simple: without discipline there could be no true church.

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<sup>134</sup> Goulart, *Le Sage Vieillard*, p.36ff.

<sup>135</sup> *Registres*, vol.V, p.viii.

<sup>136</sup> Robert Kingdon, 'Calvin and the Establishment of Consistory Discipline in Geneva: The Institution and the Men Who Directed It', in *Netherlands Archive for Reformation History* 70(1990), 158-172 at p.158.

<sup>137</sup> In 1603, for example, the *Registres*, asserted that Goulart was concerned with basic moral reforms. In this instance it stated that Goulart, '...pour leur recommander de corriger le nombre des tavernes et cabarets, et l'horrible debauché, prophétie, mauvais mesonge et destruction qui en advient en ceste ville'. See *Registres de la compagnie des pasteurs*, vol. VIII, 1600 - 1603, ed. Gabriella Cahier and Matteo Compagnolo (Geneva, 1986). In a second example, again taken from the *Registres* Goulart again made complaints regarding immorality in Geneva. On 26 April 1588 Goulart went before the



### **Discipline: child rearing**

Even a cursory glance at the Reformed discipline, and Goulart's Histoires Admirables in particular, indicates a deep and continuing concern for the family. In many respects this formed the central preoccupation of many writers at the time, and over many of the issues there was full agreement. But, whilst it was easy to berate, it was more difficult to offer any plausible solutions. They would be caught in endless contention, debating the same issues over and over, and even today the same concerns have become widely debated themes of both political and social interest.

Whilst society could never be perfected, vast and significant improvements could be made. In the first instance the reform of the community began in the home. As Goulart made clear, it was the primary duty of all fathers to educate their children in accordance with the religious, moral and political laws of church and state.<sup>138</sup> The young, being particularly impressionable, were especially prone to sin.<sup>139</sup> In other words, the perfect home was one in which good and true citizens were created, perpetuating the ideal. Man was born sinful; only through teaching and guidance could a child become a conscientious, godly and law abiding citizen. From birth, as Goulart informs us, '...we are no sooner born, than we are plunged

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Council berating the immoral behaviour of the Genevans, 'Le vendredi 26, avisé que suivant l'avis pris au consistoire le jour de devant, M. Goulard et Chauve iroyeny devant Messieurs le lundi suivant pour les advetir des desbauches qui se commettent aux jeux et tavernes'. See Registres, vol.v, p.190.

<sup>138</sup> See Goulart, Le Sage Vieillard, p.50 where Goulart comments on the role that a wise old man should have in educating the young. The responsibility of parents to oversee the education of their children was also discussed during the ninth national synod, 1578. See Quick, Synodicon, p.119. Here the synod declared that all parents had to undertake to ensure the proper education of all their children.

<sup>139</sup> See Beatrice Gottlieb, The Family in the Western World From the Black Death to the Industrial Age (Oxford, 1993), p.170.



into all corruption, and into a gulf of errors and aberrations...'<sup>140</sup> It was clear that parents had a moral responsibility to guide and correct their behaviour.<sup>141</sup> As Steven Ozment asserts, '...the habits and character developed within families became the virtues that shaped entire lands'.<sup>142</sup>

One of the greatest threats to society were citizens who placed individual need before the well-being of the community as a whole. It was the responsibility of parents to ensure that their children were disciplined and reared in an effective manner. But an equilibrium had to be maintained. Excessive discipline would lead to a recalcitrant and resentful child, of little use to the state, and almost certainly at odds with his parents. By contrast, a spoilt child would grow into a weak and ineffectual citizen, unwilling to work for the greater need of his community in times of both peace and war.<sup>143</sup> The perfect child would place family and state first; be moderate and orderly; clean in both body and mind, resisting the temptations of the dancing, games of cards and the lusts and desires of premarital sex.<sup>144</sup> Boaistuau also pointed out the dangers of immoral mothers who '...leave their daughters to dance...to paint and plaster their faces, to deck

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<sup>140</sup> Le Sage Vieillard, p.48.

<sup>141</sup> Camerarius also shared Goulart's expectations of the future generation and the importance of parental education of their children, '...that we...bring up children not for ourselves alone, but for our country, that they may (one day) not only be delightful to us, but also do service to the commonwealth...' See The Walking Librarie or meditations and Observation Historical, Natural, Political and Poetical (London, 1621), p.187.

<sup>142</sup> Steven Ozment, When Fathers Ruled. Family Life in Reformation Europe (London, 1983), p.9.

<sup>143</sup> As Boaistuau stated, too many mothers taught their children inappropriate behaviour, '...that leave their daughters to daunce...to paint and plaister their faces, to deck their fringes with rings, and their necks with jewels...' See Pierre Boasituau, Theatre of the World (London, 1574), p.68.

<sup>144</sup> For a well informed summary of this subject see Steven Ozment, 'The Family in Reformation Germany: The Bearing and Rearing of Children' in Journal of Family History, vol.8, no.2, 1983, 159-176.

their fingers with rings and their necks with jewels...'<sup>145</sup> An indulgent parent was simply a danger to the child in particular and society in general.<sup>146</sup>

The Histoires Admirables contains numerous illustrations of bad child rearing. In one memorable example a father hit his son for no reason, simply taking out his own anger and inadequacies out on the child. Hitting his son on the head with a clod of earth the boy was instantly killed. It was clear that the death was a punishment to the father for his own temper and violence. Worse still was to follow; in despair, the father committed suicide. Then his wife, in shock, left their baby to drown in the bath water and killed herself alongside her husband. As a consequence of the violent temper of the father, a whole family suffered and died. In a powerful statement Goulart wrote, 'Quels horribles effects & fruicts estrangement amers de cholere d'un pere mal - aisé! & combien, peres, meres, enfans, ont ils occasion de se recommander humblement & incessamment à Dieu'.<sup>147</sup> Michel de Montaigne, a source often used by Goulart, voices this same concern with even greater vehemence. In particular, he berated parents who hit their children, '...they scream at stupid children who are often barely weaned. Children are crippled and knocked by such battering: yet our judicial system takes no note of it'.<sup>148</sup> The use of violence when angry was fraught with pernicious consequences. Alcoholism also led to serious child neglect. In one telling example a father wasted his wages in the tavern, leaving his family without food and clothing. In desperation his wife and eldest son went to work,

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<sup>145</sup> Boaistuau, Theatre of Examples, p.68.

<sup>146</sup> Not only were there frequent complaints that parents were over-indulgent towards their children, but there are many literary examples of parents who die from grief at the loss of a child. This is far removed from the accepted belief that during the early modern period parents were unloving and desensitised by the premature deaths of their offspring

<sup>147</sup> Histoires Admirables, vols.1 & 2, p.100f.

leaving him in charge of the youngest children. Fuelled by alcohol and humiliation, he killed their three youngest children. Unable to face his wife and the consequences of justice, he killed himself. On her return home his wife, from grief, killed herself. The eldest son remained the family's sole survivor. From this tale Goulart indicates not only the pernicious and wasteful consequences of alcohol, but the need for a strong and supportive father. Only the father could provide the necessary stability for the family as a whole. Once his role and authority had been undermined, the family was condemned.<sup>149</sup>

Infanticide was also a considerable problem. Both literary and legal sources are littered with examples and Goulart was no exception.<sup>150</sup> In legal terms infanticide was the most heinous of all crimes, more reprehensible and shocking than the murder of one's own parents. The fear that infanticide was rife was such that in France in 1556, a law was passed determining that all women had to register their pregnancy with local officials. It was asserted that no birth should take place alone, whilst all miscarriages and stillbirths were to be investigated and the woman questioned.<sup>151</sup> It was even decreed that a husband who hit his pregnant wife with such violence that she miscarried, could be charged with infanticide. In

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<sup>148</sup> Montaigne, *The Complete Essays* (London, 1997), trans. M. A. Screech, p.810.

<sup>149</sup> In the *Histoires Admirables*, as well as in several of his other works, Goulart gave examples of various fathers whose behaviour could be found wanting. Indeed, in *Le Sage Vieillard* even Noah's drunken behaviour not only set an appalling example to the rest of his family, but it threatened to destroy his family. Even more so, in the *Histoires Admirables* there are numerous tales concerning parents whose behaviour destroyed their family. For example, a husband agreed to take back his adulterous wife. Then, finding that he could never forgive her he not only murdered his wife, but his two innocent children. See p. 106. Further, a father in anger hit his son. The boy died, the father then hanged himself in despair, his wife, in her distress, accidentally drowned their baby in the bath. Goulart asserted that this should serve as a warning to all parents. See p.100f. Even Noah was held up as an example of an alcoholic father, neglecting his duties as a husband and a father.

<sup>150</sup> See for example Goulart, *Histoires Admirables*, vols. 1 & 2, p. 758 is perhaps one of the most unusual incidents of infanticide. This occurred during the siege of Sancerre which Goulart recounted at length in volume two. A family not only killed one of their children but in their desperation committed an act of cannibalism on the same child.

<sup>151</sup> Sarah Hanley, 'Engendering the State', p.11.

the Histoires Admirables Goulart gives supports this long standing social and legal issue through several powerfully apt examples. One such tale was taken from Honsdorff: in 1536 in Silesia a woman suffocated her three children and then killed herself. No motive was given. A more famous example, used several times by other contemporary writers, tells of a mother who killed her eldest son with an axe, then killed her five-year-old daughter, a boy of three and even the baby in its cradle.<sup>152</sup> Goulart makes clear that this woman had no maternal instincts, refusing to listen to their pleas and cries for mercy. In the end the woman killed herself, living long enough to plead for forgiveness from her neighbours. Once more, discipline and repentance was offered by the community. Goulart asserts that the woman, '...avec grande reconnoissance de ses pechez, & esperence de la misericorde de Dieu, rendit l'esprit.'<sup>153</sup>

In a different tale, a father murdered his children out of hate and loathing. In this tale a husband was persuaded to take back his adulterous wife. Shortly afterwards, however, he realised that he could never forgive her. As a consequence, anger and hate drove him to kill not only his wife but also their children, asserting as his motivation, that he could not abide the child of a whore. It is clear that the children suffered because of the sins of their mother and the unforgiving and vengeful nature of their father. As Goulart stated, '...il despescha aussi ses enfans, alleguant qu'il ne vouloit point auoir d'enfans qui fussent nommez enfans de putain'.<sup>154</sup> Rather than face the inevitable consequences of his

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<sup>152</sup> This was a familiar tale during the sixteenth century. One example of this tale in English can be found in Thomas Beard's A Collection of Histories out of Sacred, Ecclesiasticall, and prophane Authors, Concerning the Admirable Iudgements of God upon the Transgressours of his commandements (London, 1597) STC Reel 99, p.277.

<sup>153</sup> Histoires Admirables, p.101.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, p.106.

actions the man killed himself. In Goulart's works, many of the incidents of infanticide which he relates stem from the violence, anger or drunkenness of one of the parents. The contemporary literature has many similar examples.<sup>155</sup>

Infanticide was not only unnatural and shocking, it was also a sin. These tales serve to emphasise the widespread nature of infanticide. It was more than a literary conceit.

Writers such as Goulart did not merely provide negative examples. Several tales in the Histoires Admirables sought to reinforce the true bond which should exist between parent and child. Goulart incorporates several telling examples of mothers who sought to preserve the life of their children. According to one example, a catastrophic conflagration spread through the Dutch city of Delft on 2 May 1536. A stork, returning from a hunting trip, realised that the fire would consume her nest. The babies, unable to fly, could not be saved. The mother settled on the nest, opened her wings, protecting her children, sacrificing her life to protect her offspring. As Goulart states in the conclusion to this tale, the bird showed greater charity than many parents. He wrote, 'Quel proces ce charitable oiseau a fait aux peres & meres qui n'ont rien de nature & d'humanité que la face!'<sup>156</sup> Despite his condemnation of the inhumanity of man, he does include several examples of mothers willing to sacrifice their own lives. One unusual example comes from Florence. A lion, having escaped from a zoo in the city, made as though to kill a little girl. The mother, in desperation, was able to distract the animal and save her daughter. Another mother was willing to prostitute

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<sup>155</sup> Boisatuu, Theatre of the World, p.33.

<sup>156</sup> Histoires Admirables, vol. 1 & 2, p.184.

herself in order to pay for food and clothing for her children.<sup>157</sup> In Goulart's tales, however, these tales of self-sacrifice and redemption remain the exception. Violence, greed and hatred are presented as the norm.

### **Family Relationships: Children and Parents**

Whilst parents had to feed, educate and discipline their children, in their turn children had to treat their parents with honour and deference. Amongst the most frequent complaints dealt with by consistories in both France and Geneva concerned manipulative and acquisitive children who sought to gain their inheritance before the death of their parents. Cases involving the neglect and maltreatment of elderly parents were also frequent concerns.<sup>158</sup> It was clear that children maintained a responsibility towards their parents until they died.

Neglect was one of the most common of all complaints. Children were seemingly unwilling to lend support to elderly parents once they were unable to work and lead independent lives. In part, this was exacerbated by short-sighted parents who gave their children control of all money and property before their death. Constant warnings were made in numerous medieval sermons.<sup>159</sup> One medieval text, greatly favoured by contemporary preachers, cautioned fathers against distributing property before death, 'Give not to son or wife, brother or friend, power over thee whilst thou livest: and give not thy estate to another, lest thou repent...For it is better that thy children should ask of thee than that thou look

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p.643.

<sup>158</sup> Charyere, 'The Great Difficulties One Must Bear', p.77ff.

<sup>159</sup> Ozment, When Fathers Ruled, p.112.



towards the hands of thy children'.<sup>160</sup> The most famous literary example is probably King Lear who gave his two children, Goneril and Regan, control over his kingdom with disastrous consequences. Both Goulart's tales themselves, as well as the story of King Lear, considered the foolhardiness of relinquishing one's hold over an inheritance before death. The consequences were always ruinous.<sup>161</sup> Montaigne shared a similar outlook. First he asserted that no healthy father should hand over his wealth to his children. Next, in one of his many personal asides, he pertinently stated, 'I have no wish to be stripped bare before I go and lie down'.<sup>162</sup> There is no reason to doubt that Goulart agreed with Montaigne's views.

Goulart must have learned from personal experience that an inheritance led to grave difficulties.<sup>163</sup> The rapacity and evil which could stem from the prospect of an inheritance was made apparent in one of the most striking and memorable tales in the whole work. In order to gain the inheritance of his father, a son falsely accused his father of bestiality, conviction of carried the death penalty. The son reported his father to the authorities. In a striking phrase Goulart stated, 'Vn fils despouille tellement le nom de fils qu'il accuse son propre pere de s'estre meslé avec vne beste'.<sup>164</sup> The father, entirely innocent of this crime, was forced to confess his 'guilt' under pain of torture, although he later retracted his statement. Nevertheless, he was found guilty and conviction went ahead based upon the

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<sup>160</sup> David Herlihy, Medieval Households (London, 1985), p.123.

<sup>161</sup> The most obvious contemporary example of a transfer of power from father to son before death was the abdication of Charles V, a move which had serious repercussions for decades to come.

<sup>162</sup> Montaigne, Essays, p.439.

<sup>163</sup> It will be remembered that in 1572 Goulart returned to France for the first time in six years in order to arrange the will of his father who had died some years earlier. This return visit had nearly cost Goulart his own life.

<sup>164</sup> Histoires Admirables, p.302.



false testimonies of several witnesses.<sup>165</sup> As the father was sent to his death he cried out, '...qu'il totalement incoupable & innocent de telle accusation brassée par son fils, lequel ne cherchoit que sa mort pour estre maistre des biens & les dissiper'.<sup>166</sup> From this impassioned statement, it is clear that the son's sole objective was the acquisition of his father's fortune. In the aftermath of this miscarriage of justice the judge and all the 'witnesses' died in horrific circumstances. More importantly, the son who had falsely accused his father in the first instance was overwhelmed by guilt and hanged himself. Not surprisingly, in the light of this particular tale, a constant refrain in the literature of the day was the fear that children harboured evil thoughts towards their parents. Children who had the potential to steal and murder were believed to be a constant threat.<sup>167</sup>

A second exceptionally popular tale was equally violent and devastating. Taken from Lonicer, Goulart tells of a son who killed his mother and father in cold blood in order to secure his inheritance. At first no one suspected that he had committed this terrible crime, so aggrieved was he at their deaths. Shortly after, however, neighbours noticed that he now had more money than usual. Amongst his recent purchases were a pair of shoes. On collecting the new pair, however, he left his old pair at the cobblers, the cobbler noticing that the soles of the old pair were covered in blood. After reporting the son to the authorities he was arrested and quickly confessed, albeit with no evident sense of remorse.<sup>168</sup> This was

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<sup>165</sup> In fact, the so called witnesses were fellow prisoners. In France, it was illegal to use prisoners as witnesses in a legal proceeding. As a consequence, Goulart reveals that justice in France had become so corrupt that prisoner was judging prisoner.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, p.302f.

<sup>167</sup> Flandrin, *Families in Former Times* (Cambridge, 1979), p.152.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid, p.217.

clearly a popular tale, used many times over in sixteenth-century books to illustrate this rapacious crime.<sup>169</sup>

Even when parents retained control of their inheritance, poverty or infirmity could strike. In this eventuality it was the responsibility of the children to given financial and physical support to their parents. Just as parents had a duty to care for, nourish, clothe and educated their children, in their turn children had a duty to look after their parents with generosity and care. Children who shunned their duties were an affront to the society and community in which they lived. The parent-child relationship was, in effect, reversed. Goulart was as ready as ever with a pertinent example. The tale is simple: a son refused to help his elderly and needy father. The father is turned away and left on the street. Immediately the son dies, divine vengeance for his evil and unforgivable act.<sup>170</sup> This was more than a literary refrain: it was a real and pressing problem for many town councils and consistories.

The consistory in France, for example, complained that once children had made their own fortune they were too ungracious and selfish to give their family financial aid, perhaps embarrassed by their parents impoverished state.<sup>171</sup> Goulart tells of a rich man who, ashamed at seeing his father beg, was forced to give him shelter. Instead of sharing all he had with his father he constantly tortured and demeaned the old man, reminding him of dependent state. One dinner the rich man sat down to eat a vast dish of meat, refusing to share it with his father. When his father left the room the son resumed eating the meat, but to his horror found

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<sup>169</sup> See Beard, A Collection of Histories, p.206.

that his food had turned into a plate of snakes. The man was so horrified he altered his ways for good.<sup>172</sup> Once again, this was a popular and familiar tale, and one which struck a cord with contemporary moralists.<sup>173</sup> As Goulart's contemporary, Thomas Beard asserted, such tales '...ought to be a warning to all parents to look better to the education of their children, and to root out of them in time all evil and corrupt manners'.<sup>174</sup> Whilst such behaviour could never be condoned or tolerated, in part the parents were to blame: a more thorough and effective education would have ensured their more tolerant and humane treatment.

Beyond the literary material, the worlds of fiction and real life met with striking familiarity. In Nîmes a case was heard before the consistory which would not have been out of place in Goulart's works. Here the consistory faced numerous complaints regarding children who were so ashamed at their parents' poverty that the sight of them was unbearable. In one particular incident a master tailor called Hercule Julien not only refused to eat at the same table as his father, but gave him only a threadbare shirt to wear. The son was reprimanded and ordered to treat his father in a more fitting and appropriate manner.<sup>175</sup> From the literature of the time there are several strikingly similar examples.<sup>176</sup> City councils were increasingly

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<sup>170</sup> *Histoires Admirables*, p.216.

<sup>171</sup> Charyere, 'The Great Difficulties One Must Bear', p.79

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid*, p.216f.

<sup>173</sup> Once again this tale appears in Beard's *A Collection of Histories*, p.206. In essence Beard's rendering of the tale is identical to Goulart's with one telling exception. Beard asserts that one of the snakes clasped onto the man's bottom lip and remained there until the day the man died. From then on, he had to feed both himself and the serpent, a constant reminder of his selfishness and greed.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, p.210.

<sup>175</sup> Charyere, 'The Great Difficulties One Must Bear', p.78.

<sup>176</sup> One tale asserts that a son unwillingly gave shelter to his impoverished father. Instead of treating him with respect and consideration he derided and tortured the old man. Even his clothing was severely rationed, giving him only one old shirt to wear. The old man's grandson, however, sympathised with him. As punishment, the young boy took all his father's shirts, warning him that when he was old and

concerned at the number of elderly parents who were left at the town's poor house or hospital because the children no longer wanted to be burdened with the responsibility of looking after their parents. Some were found begging in the streets, reliant upon the charity of others.<sup>177</sup> In many respects the reformation of behaviour began in the home, founded upon the fundamental relationship which lay between parents and their offspring. After all, the fifth commandment asserted that children should honour their mother and father that all their days be long. The Biblical precedents were unequivocal. Ultimately, the relationship between parent and child was reciprocal. Simon Goulart would have been all too familiar with the chapter in St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians which asserted in no uncertain terms, 'Children obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother...And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord'.<sup>178</sup> This theme is constantly played out in the Histoires Admirables.

Goulart, in tandem with other contemporary writers, considered that order within the household was vital if order was to be upheld within the wider community. Children had to be humble and obedient, necessary for the maintenance of an equilibrium in society. Goulart assumed that the father was the head of the family, with substantial powers over all who lived in his house. He controlled his wife, children and servants, as well as all money and most property. It was the duty of all within his house to honour and respect him. In the literature, at least, the figure of the father was styled as God's representative on earth. As such, the

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needy he would ration his clothes, and leave him wanting. The man saw the error of his ways and reformed his behaviour. See Beard, A Collection of Histories, p.207.

<sup>177</sup> Ozment, When Fathers Ruled, p.152.

<sup>178</sup> Ephesians, 6.1-4.

father should be respected and honoured as God. It has been recently aptly asserted that, 'The authority of the father of the family, and the authority of God, not only legitimised on another, they served to legitimise all other authorities: kings, lords, patrons and ecclesiastics have all presented themselves as fathers and as the representatives of God'.<sup>179</sup> Just as it was unlawful to rise up against the legitimate and God-fearing ruler of a country, so was it unjust and unlawful to rise up against one's father. Whilst no literary precedent and anecdote can account for the very real differences which must have prevailed in countless individual homes, it is clear that the father had significant power within the household. This theoretical situation has been accurately described as a monarchy based on divine right.<sup>180</sup>

### **Relationships: Marriage**

Within both church and state, marriage became the focus of one of the lengthiest and most intractable debates. Marriage, together with all the processes which led to its creation and dissolution, was a constant refrain. In both Geneva and France, both religious and civil authorities were concerned that all stages of marriage and married life were conducted in the proper manner. The complexities of divorce aside, Catholic and Protestant were often in full agreement over many of the issues which moralists believed were destroying the institution of marriage. Deviant behaviour such as clandestine marriage, adultery, bigamous marriages, and unfulfilled promises of marriage were all issues of the utmost urgency. By the turn of the seventeenth century, according to many moralists, such behaviour

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<sup>179</sup> Flandrin, Families in Former Times, p.120.

was rife.<sup>181</sup> But why were church and state so concerned with such problems, and what was the attitude of the church towards such dangerous liaisons?

For the Reformed, marriage became a predominant issue. Their clergy, unlike those of the Catholic faith, were held up as examples of this marital ideal, in their steady, married relationships. Luther, most strikingly, provided the correct image of a compatible, well - functioning marriage. In contrast, of course, the Reformed showed before the world an example which contrasted sharply with the fornication and immorality which they perceived to be endemic in the relationships of the supposedly celibate Catholic clergy.<sup>182</sup> Instead, marriage and not celibacy became the ideal, a necessity not only for the procreation of children, but also to prevent fornication.<sup>183</sup> Nor, according to the Protestants was marriage a sacrament, an argument which opened the way for divorce. As Luther stated, '...nowhere in Scripture do we read that anyone would receive the grace of God by getting married, nor does the rite of matrimony contain any hint that the ceremony is of divine institution'.<sup>184</sup> Whatever the differences between the Protestant faiths, marriage became an ideal which was subject to considerable moral and disciplinary scrutiny during this period. It was considered that deviant behaviour within marriage was an affront to both church and society. It was also

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid, p.118. Thomas Beard in his A Collection of Histories asserted that princes were like fathers, both had to maintain order in all things, whilst remaining compliant with the discipline of the church.

<sup>181</sup> The evidence from Nîmes seems to offer conclusive evidence. During the period 1561-1614 1,754 cases of adultery, fornication, marriage and family disputes were heard by the consistory. It can be taken that many more such cases were never even brought before the consistory, and as such remain unrecorded. So serious was the situation in this town that Philip Charyere wrote, 'The reconciliation of feuding couples and condemnation of adultery proved an endless task'. See Philip Charyere, 'The Great Difficulties One Must Bear', p.67ff. Clearly, marriage disputes took up a considerable amount of the consistory's time.

<sup>182</sup> Lyndal Roper, The Holy Household (Oxford, 1989), p.17.

<sup>183</sup> Bucer, however, went still further, asserting that marriage was not necessarily designed for procreation, citing the marriage of Mary and Joseph as his example. Roderick Phillips, Putting Asunder (Cambridge, 1988), p.69.



widely believed that if these sins were allowed to persist or not duly punished then the whole community would be culpable: all would have to share in and suffer divine retribution and vengeance.

Whilst divorce remained exceptional, the Protestant church did acknowledge that not all marriages met the ideal. Whilst Luther and the other reformers praised the ideal of love and piety in marriage, clearly many relationships were riven with dissension and hate. The Reformed church, in particular, gave marital advice and guidance through the consistory, and in all but the most extreme cases, couples were instructed to be reunited and live once more in harmony. In Zürich, the authorities in this Reformed state even went so far as to establish a marriage court, the Ehegericht. This was, however, a civil and not an ecclesiastical court. Only in the most extreme cases would a couple be granted a divorce. No matter if they were simply incompatible: they had been married before God and would live together until death. Even in cases of adultery the innocent party was often persuaded to take back the erring partner. Not surprisingly Goulart's work is loaded with examples detailing the problems inherent within an unhappy marriage.<sup>185</sup> Whilst Goulart offered little advice on how to improve a difficult marriage, couples were warned against making a hasty marriage. Many unhappy marriages were considered to be the consequence of hasty and immature unions. In consideration of the dominant place which marriage and marital concerns took

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<sup>184</sup> Lyndal Roper, "'Going to the Church and Street': Weddings in Reformation Augsburg", in Past and Present, 106, 1985, 62 - 101, p.64.

<sup>185</sup> Many of these unhappy marriages were, of course, the consequence of adultery. Other unhappy marriages were caused when an old man married a significantly younger woman, for example Histoires Admirables, vols. 1 & 2, p.25. Furthermore, unhappy relationships were caused by a domineering and dictatorial husband. One man had even lost a wager on his three daughters which stipulated that when they came of age they would be prostituted. In retaliation he killed all three. See Histoires Admirables, vols. 1 & 2, p.105.



place within the Catholic and Protestant church, a whole genre of literature developed debating issues such as clandestine marriage and correct methods of betrothal. Goulart, once more, reflects these popular concerns.

### **Betrothal**

The decision to marry was not the sole concern of the couple, but in effect a financial transaction between families.<sup>186</sup> Even where freedom of choice was a consideration, financial arrangements were given priority. Before the marriage could take place a contract was drawn up, specifying the dowry and material belongings the future bride would bring with her to her new home, whilst the wedding itself became a public statement of wealth and social prestige.<sup>187</sup> In effect, it was a transition of authority and sometimes substantial amounts of property from father to husband.

But many couples failed to realise, or chose to ignore, that a promise of marriage was considered as binding as marriage itself. Jean de Coras, one of the most famous jurist of his day, was at pains to clarify many such issues.<sup>188</sup> Only in extreme circumstances could this promise be retracted.<sup>189</sup> As the Reformed church was asserted, however, non-payment of the dowry was not a legitimate reason for cancelling a wedding; the dowry was, in the eyes of the church, a non-essential. In Nîmes a soldier was threatened with excommunication if he did not fulfil his promise of marriage: his only excuse was his fiancée did not have the

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<sup>186</sup> Whilst many marriages during this period were not, of course, arranged, a betrothal was normally arranged following the consultation of the family as a whole.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid, p.71.

<sup>188</sup> Jean de Coras, Paraphrase svr l'edict des mariages clandestinement contractez.

one hundred livres she had promised at their engagement. The marriage went ahead.<sup>190</sup> It was not uncommon, in France at least, for an individual to be excommunicated following a refusal to fulfil a promise of engagement. As the fourth national synod in France declared in 1563, the law for betrothed and married couples was the same; it was a legal bond.<sup>191</sup> Difficulties obviously arose when a man made offers of marriage to several women at the same time. In this situation it was accepted practice that the woman who had received the first offer of marriage would become his bride.

The engagement ceremony also had its own accompanying rituals, the engagement sometimes sealed by the touching of hands or drinking from a common cup in the name of marriage. An exchange of gifts sometimes followed, typically a ring for the woman and a white shirt for the man. At this stage all financial arrangements were made. The Protestant church decreed that all engagements had to take place before witnesses, otherwise it would be declared void. The whole issue of betrothals became a long and tiring concern within the Reformed church. Eventually, in 1612, the French Reformed church acknowledged defeat. They declared that betrothals were no longer deemed as binding as marriage, and as a consequence reverted back to standard Catholic practice. It was an acknowledgement that in many respects an identifiably different Reformed culture was impossible to enforce.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> For example, if the woman had lied about being a virgin and the truth was discovered before the wedding.

<sup>190</sup> Mentzer, 'Ecclesiastical Discipline and Communal Reorganisation Among the Protestants of Southern France', in *European History Quarterly*, vol.21, 1991, 163 - 183, p.175.

<sup>191</sup> Quick, *Synodicon* (London, 1692), p.45.

<sup>192</sup> Raymond Mentzer, 'Ecclesiastical Discipline', p.174ff.

Goulart himself was deeply concerned that marriages were neither being contracted in the appropriate manner, nor that married couples respected the laws of church and state. In the Histoires Admirables we are told the sorry tale of a failed promise of marriage which led to the pregnancy of a naive young girl. She had been duped into a relationship through promises of marriage. The girl clearly believed that she had become engaged to the man. In this particular tale a man of lowly parentage had travelled to the southern Netherlands city of Bruges. He lied and tricked his way into the pay of a wealthy merchant living in the city. The man claimed that he was in fact from a very wealthy family, but had been forced to flee from an arranged marriage. In time, he fell for the merchant's daughter, and with promises of marriage, seduced the girl who became pregnant. Not wanting to marry her he was forced to flee the town and was condemned to death in his absence. As Goulart wrote, 'Sur ce il ce comporte avec tant d'artifices, que sous promesse de mariage, il desbauche meschamment la fille de son hoste, & finalement l'engrosse'.<sup>193</sup> In a simple tale, Goulart aptly illustrated several dangers inherent in inexpedient proposals. Firstly, Goulart highlights the reality that this was a betrothal conducted without witnesses and without proof. Next, he made apparent the improper and sinful nature of pre-marital sex. Lastly, concerns are made that the girl was willing to become engaged to a man of significantly lower social status, albeit unknowingly. From Plutarch on, moralists had been highly critical of marriage between couples of vastly different social backgrounds.<sup>194</sup> The Protestant church insisted that the marriage itself took place within six weeks of the betrothal, thereby minimising the risk of pre-marital

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<sup>193</sup> Goulart, Histoires Admirables, p.388.

<sup>194</sup> Plutarch, Moralia, trans. F.C. Babbitt (London, 1977), p.65. In this instance Plutarch warned that a man should never marry a woman of a higher social status, '...since those who take to wife women far

sex.<sup>195</sup> Raymond Mentzer cites a similar example from Nîmes. A girl called Anthonie Louise was forced to perform penance when she became pregnant following her engagement.<sup>196</sup> The church was, however, powerless to enforce any stricter controls.

### **Clandestine Marriage**

It was clearly believed that marriages which were not conducted in the correct manner were sinful, an affront to both God and society. One of the most frequently voiced complaints was directed at clandestine marriage. So great was the literary outpouring against such marriages, both Protestant and Catholic, civil and religious, that it would seem that the problem had reached pandemic proportions. As Joel Harrington has asserted, 'By the time of the Reformation, the stereotype of strong -minded, disobedient children marrying against their parents wishes and with disastrous consequences had become a well-established topic of most European literature'.<sup>197</sup>

Goulart, once more, reveals his concern, doubtless influenced by incidents which he must have faced as a pastor.<sup>198</sup> He includes several telling examples. The most famous of all clandestine marriages was the tragic marriage of Romeo and Juliet,

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above themselves unwittingly become not the husbands of their wives, but the slaves of their wives' dowries'.

<sup>195</sup> This was a frequently heard call, despite the fact that in Geneva, during the generation after Calvin's death, rates of illegitimate births was only 0.14%, a strikingly low figure. Perhaps it was perceived to be a greater problem than it really was. See Philip Benedict, *The Huguenot Population of France*, p.95f.

<sup>196</sup> Mentzer, 'Ecclesiastical Discipline', p.175.

<sup>197</sup> See Joel H F. Harrington, 'Hausvater and Landesvater: Paternalism and Marriage. Reform in Sixteenth Century Germany', in *Central European History*, 25, 1992, pp.52-75, at p.55.

<sup>198</sup> In the *Registres*, vol. IV, Goulart, alongside the other pastors, was a stern critic of contemporary marriages, 'Ils'efforcent de maintenir la pure doctrine de l'Evangile et se montrent d'un extrême vigilance en matière de mœurs, et notamment dans les cas de divorces au de mariages contraires au

a tale originating from fifteenth-century Italy. Equally tragic, and almost as well-known, was the secret love of the duchess of Malfi. Both tales are told at length by Goulart, as well as numerous other moralists.<sup>199</sup> In addition to these two popular tales Goulart included several less familiar, but equally memorable and instructive examples of clandestine marriage. One concerns a nobleman from Spain who fell passionately and violently in love with a poor miller's daughter. Although he agreed to marry her, the marriage was conducted in secret, clandestinely, in the presence of his mother and a priest, 'Viancu de son affection, il la pourchasse à femme, l'espouse en chambre, presens la mere & les freres d'icelle'. Shortly after, however, he fell in love with another woman, this time marrying in public, 'Sous ce pretexte l'ayany entretenue vn an & demi ou environ, finalement transporté d'ature nouveau desir il espouse publiquement vne dame de grande maison'. Left without proof that her husband had contracted a bigamous marriage, his first wife plotted her revenge. During their last night together she murdered him, willingly going to her own death as a consequence.<sup>200</sup> As the nobleman's friends made clear such a woman was suitable only as a mistress and not as a wife. Goulart was not prepared to view clandestine marriages, conducted in secret, away from the eyes of the community, as true marriage. In a telling phrase, used in relation to the clandestine marriage of the duchess of Malfi, but one which could be applied to any such marriage, Goulart reveals his feelings with force. He wrote, '...sous le voide de mariage clandestin

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ordonnances.' This also indicated the lack of success which the Company of Pastors had, even in Geneva, in the enforcement of moral legislation.

<sup>199</sup> Many moralists throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century included the instructive tale of the clandestine marriage of the duchess of Malfi to her servant. It is included in Belleforest as well as William Painter's translation of this work, *The First Volume of the Palace of Pleasure* (London, 1575), sig. Sivrff. In this work Belleforest asserts that the duchess with her servant spoke words of marriage in secret to each other, 'And for the present time they passed the same in words, for ratification whereof they went to bed together'.

<sup>200</sup> Goulart, *Histoires Admirables*, p.317.

de celle qui s'estoit oubliee a lui ietter de longue main beaucoup d'oeillades peu chastes & de laquelle il s'estoit imprudemment & contre tout deuoir amourache<sup>201</sup> Such marriages were clearly a perversion of a true and honourable marriage.

But why were so many writers, like Simon Goulart, deeply concerned with the problem of clandestine marriage? A clandestine marriage, as its name indicates, was conducted in private, without witnesses, parental consent or the usual reading of the banns. These marriages were typically not performed in a church, but in a private home, often in a parish remote from that of the couple. Despite the frequent opposition, from both civil and ecclesiastical authorities, clandestine marriage continued. It was widely believed that such marriages led to immature unions, without parental consent, and therefore loss of parental control. An additional concern was that such marriages would lead to bigamy, as Goulart indicated in the tale above. Not only were bigamous marriages obviously illegal and a sin, but the consequences of bigamy had become a fearful reality following the Anabaptist excesses of Münster, where polygamy was encouraged amongst the men. In reality bigamous marriages were notoriously difficult to detect, especially during times of religious and political flux, times during which both men and women were displaced and frequently moved from their local region. Many men, in particular, travelled alone, some of whom were already married but left their families behind. In an attempt to combat such marriages, the Reformed church decreed that all couples who wanted to be married in a parish removed

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid, p.319.



from their own must carry a letter of introduction from their own minister.<sup>202</sup> In an effort to prevent clandestine marriage the Reformed church declared null and void all marriages contracted without parental consent.

In direct contrast to the Reformed, the Catholic church continued to recognise clandestine marriages. Whilst the decrees of the Council of Trent asserted that all marriages had to be conducted in the presence of a priest following the public reading of the banns, in practice clandestine marriages were still considered a legal and binding agreement. More striking, however, was the harsh stance of the civil authorities in France, establishing laws which directly contradicted the canon law of the Catholic church. The law in France was severe, even equating marriage without parental consent with the capital crime of 'rapt' and abduction.<sup>203</sup> The age of a minor was raised, for men, from twenty to thirty, and from seventeen to twenty five for women. These laws apparently had little impact. As late as 1639 all offspring, however old, were deemed minors. The great law of 1556 also declared that all children who formed a clandestine marriage, without parental consent, could be disinherited. This law was repeated in 1579. Still further, the law of 1639 declared that all children born from a clandestine marriage could not inherit.<sup>204</sup> It was clear that over a period of almost one hundred years, the French state sought to bring great pressure on those who

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<sup>202</sup> In 1563, for example, during the synod at Lyon, it was decreed that no church should marry a couple from a different parish unless they held some form of certificate.

<sup>203</sup> On this subject see James R. Farr, 'Parlementaires and the Paradox of Power: Sovereignty and Jurisprudence in Rapt cases in Early Modern Burgundy', in *European History Quarterly* (1995), 325-351, at p.341. Here Farr states that in 1561 Charles IX decreed that clandestine marriage should be identified with the crime of abduction and rape. As such, the death penalty could be used. Jean de Coras, in his *Paraphrase* stated that the Law of Justinian asserted that children who married without the consent of their parents could be charged with the crime of rape, sig.Cviiv.

<sup>204</sup> Much of the above has relied upon Hanley, 'Engendering the State', p.9ff.

formed clandestine unions. Despite the severity of the laws, however, clandestine marriages clearly persisted. It proved an intractable problem.<sup>205</sup>

Beyond the legal position of the French state, many writers became concerned with the problem of clandestine marriage. Goulart, like many of his contemporaries, voiced strikingly similar concerns. Several writers, for example, related the tales of the clandestine marriages of the duchess of Malfi and Romeo and Juliet. These tales can be found in the work of the English author Thomas Beard as well as Belleforest.<sup>206</sup> In fact, Thomas Beard was a very outspoken critic of clandestine marriage, asserting that it was no more than fornication and, 'For it is so farre from deserving the name of marriage, that on the other side it can be nothing but plaine whoredome and fornication'.<sup>207</sup> The marriage of Romeo and Juliet was also criticised by Belleforest. In particular, Juliet was attacked for her consent in consummating a marriage which was not a true marriage, since it was conducted without the consent of their parents.<sup>208</sup> The lawyer, Jean de Coras, however, provided what was probably the most famous of all condemnations of clandestine marriage. Coras was, of course, the presiding judge in the infamous case of Martin Guerre.

His work against clandestine marriage, Paraphrase sur l'edict des mariages clandestinement contractez par les enfans de famille, contre le gré & constestement de leurs peres & meres, was a widely known and used work.

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<sup>205</sup> The persistence of clandestine marriage is made apparent from the repeated concerns of the French synod throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See Quick, Synodicon. During the 1559 synod, p.6. 1563 synod, p.40, 1565 synod, p.64 and 1567 synod, p.81. During the years which followed there would be many similar complaints.

<sup>206</sup> Beard, p.322.

<sup>207</sup> Beard, p.321.

Goulart was certainly familiar with this source. In this work, Coras condemned clandestine marriages as an abomination against God, whilst denouncing the offspring of such liaisons as illegitimate. He was clearly in agreement with the recent law of 1556. Moreover, in line with moralists such as Goulart, Coras believed that clandestine marriages were often formed by immature adolescents, moved only by superficial physical attraction. In contrast, legal marriages were formed with, ‘...raison, conseil & deliberation presedente’.<sup>209</sup> Coras went still further. He called for the full force of the law to be used against the contractors of these heinous marriages: they should be charged with the far more serious capital crime of abduction and rape.<sup>210</sup> As Goulart, Coras and other moralists intended, the reader was to be left with no doubt that clandestine marriage was a serious offence, both against God and the state. Despite the repeated condemnation of such marriages detection and punishment proved both contentious and complex.

### Adultery

Adultery was a particular moral concern. Goulart’s works are replete with examples of the dangers inherent in an adulterous relationship. Adultery was considered a most serious sin and crime, and in Geneva, in exceptional circumstances, could warrant the death penalty. In Beza’s Geneva, whilst such cases were rare, they were not entirely absent. Condemnation of adultery was, of course, not unique to the later sixteenth-century, but the frequency with which this particular crime appears in Goulart’s works warrants further investigation. As

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid, p. Z6v.

<sup>209</sup> Coras, *Paraphrase*, sig.Cvr.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid, sig.Cviirf.

Bucer stated, adultery struck right at the heart of marriage, destroying in an instant its primary purpose.<sup>211</sup>

Goulart himself was a vehement and outspoken critic of adultery. With regard to this wicked act he was moved to write, 'The punishments of sin are torments, vexations of the mind, grief, passion, fear and other miseries...'<sup>212</sup> He goes further, however, asserting that adultery brought destruction upon the souls of the perpetrators: '...he who commits adultery with a woman is destitute of understanding and destroys his own soul'<sup>213</sup> As though to emphasise the heinous and ghastly nature of this sin, in the Histoires Admirables Goulart piles example upon example.

In contrast to the aims of consistorial reform, none of Goulart's tales relating to adultery end in a successful reconciliation. Instead, the majority of the guilty victims die, perhaps symbolising the death of their soul, as well as the death of their marriage. Clearly, he regarded such people as a pollution within society, no longer worthy of life. Their death was a means of cleansing society. In one such tale Goulart asserts,

Il y'a nonante ans ou environ, que certain Seigneur Piedmontois de descouurit de longue main que sa femme, issue de moyene maison, & qu'il auoit espousee pour son plaisir, oubliant l'honneur de Dieu, l'honneur que son mari lui auoit fait, son honneur propre, auoit esté si execrable que de souiller la maison, la chambre,

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<sup>211</sup> Roderick Phillips, Putting Asunder (Cambridge, 1988), p.87.

<sup>212</sup> Goulart, Le Sage Vieillard, p.64.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid, p.66f.

& la couche de son Seigneur & mari, par frequent adultere avec en gentilhomme sien voisin qu'elle auoit marschamment desbauché.<sup>214</sup>

Not only had the woman violated her marriage, polluted her home and dishonoured her husband, she had brought about her own downfall. In this tale, as in so many others, reconciliation and forgiveness were simply not possible.

Ultimately, the woman was forced to hang her lover and, as a consequence, herself committed suicide, 'Ayans demeuré quelque peu de iours en ceste puanteur, sans consolation, vaincues de douleur & desespoir, finirent ainsi leur miserable vie'.<sup>215</sup> Whilst the husband's actions might seem morally dubious, Goulart does not consider his measures either illegal or morally reprehensible. The woman had committed a terrible outrage, a violation of the honour of her husband and the sanctity of their marriage.

There are many similar tales in the Histoires Admirables. The vast majority of these tales, not surprisingly, depict adulterous women. In a similar tale a husband discovered that his wife was conducting an adulterous affair. Trapping his wife and her lover, the man exacted his revenge. Firstly, he killed the man by tearing the flesh off his body. Next, he attempted to kill his wife in a similar manner, leaving her on the edge of life and death. The woman survived, left to contemplate her sin, 'Le procureur se transporta ailleurs & le femme demeura couuerte d'opprobre le reste de ses iours'.<sup>216</sup> As for the husband, despite the despicable nature of his own crimes, he is left to pass the rest of his days as a free man, without guilt or punishment.

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<sup>214</sup> Goulart, Histoires Admirables, p.19f.

Of course, both men and women were equally capable of committing adultery. Goulart includes several examples of men who were punished for their sins. One man left his loyal and loving wife for another woman. On his return home, however, he suffered an unusual, but fatal, accident. His horse suddenly reared. Falling, the man caught his foot in the stirrups and was dragged to his death. This was clearly divine punishment for his terrible crime.<sup>217</sup> In Goulart's examples of adultery punishment typically came in two ways: either the innocent partner would punish them with their own hand, or divine intervention would ensure their painful demise. It does seem, however, that Goulart was taking an exceptionally harsh line towards adulterers, in part due to the exemplary nature of the work as a whole, but more importantly, as a consequence of the entertaining intention of the work as a whole. In reality, reconciliation remained the norm.<sup>218</sup>

Goulart was not alone in his denunciation of adultery. Many contemporary writers voiced similar criticisms.<sup>219</sup> From the age of Homer, and doubtless before, adultery had been condemned. Afterall, Troy had been destroyed because of Helen's adulterous liaison. Whilst tales of adultery were not new, in the sixteenth century there appears to be a heightened and more vocal opposition. Adultery was perceived to be an all pervasive sin, tearing away at the fabric of society.

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid, p.20.

<sup>216</sup> Goulart, *Histoires Admirables*, p.29.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid, p.32.

<sup>218</sup> One interesting example of the reconciliation of an adulterous wife and her husband which was struggling to be successful was retold by William Painter in *The Palace of Pleasure* (London, 1582), p.253rf. He asserts that an official of Charles VIII stopped at a gentleman's house for dinner. At the table sat a beautiful, but sad and forlorn woman, who drank from a cup made from the head of a dead man. After the meal, the man asked his host about the woman. he was informed that it was his wife, and that she was suffering the consequences of her adulterous behaviour, 'Shee forgot both herself...and the love shee bore towards mee, and fell in love with a gentleman...' It was clear that although they continued to live together in the same house, true reconciliation had become impossible and neither could forget the act of adultery.



Even Montaigne was a self-confessed adulterer. He wrote, 'When I was born into marriage, I was less broken in...than I am now...And womaniser though I am held to be, I have, in truth, more rigidly observed the law of matrimony than I ever vowed or hoped'. It was well known that Montaigne caught syphilis from one of his many extramarital liaisons. Clearly, however, his rather dubious morality did not detract from the overall wisdom of his writings.

Amongst the most vocal and impassioned opponents of adultery was Boaistuau, a source frequently cited by Goulart. On adultery, Boaistuau wrote, '...it was truly spoken by St. Paul...wryting to the Ephesians, when he sayd, that there can be no greater punishment for an adulterer than to be blinded in his filthiness...that fornicators and adulterers shal not possesse the kingdom of God'.<sup>220</sup> Doubtless Goulart shared these sentiments. It would seem that Boaistuau was voicing a well-heard and popular opinion when he wrote, 'All of which evils are so common and so usual at this time amongst men...'.<sup>221</sup> For Goulart, as for other moralists of his time, adultery had become the most prominent of many sins. Adultery, however, had to be met head on. It threatened to destroy the very heart of society, marriage and the family.

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<sup>219</sup> Philip Camerarius was one such writer. In The Mediations he asserted that many kings, emperors and princes had been killed and murdered because of their frequent, adulterous liaisons.

<sup>220</sup> Boaistuau, A most excellent hystorie of the Institution and beginning of Christian Princes and the original of kingdomes: Whereunto is annexed a treatise of Peace and Warre, and another of the dignitie of marriage (London, 1571), translated James Chillester. See p.182.

<sup>221</sup> Beard, sig.B1v.

## **Conclusion**

Many other moral issues came under the scrutiny of the Reformed, but marriage and the family were a particular concern. By placing Goulart's own moral agenda against his contemporary ecclesiastical, civil and legal background, it becomes apparent that whilst an outspoken and severe critic, his opinions formed part of a broader debate which encompassed condemnations of drinking, gambling, dancing and improper dress.

Throughout his life as a pastor Goulart became absorbed in the relentless struggle against immorality. And yet, even though endless sermons were preached, laws written and rewritten and books published, little appears to have changed during the century of reform. Both Catholics and Protestants sought differing solutions to exactly the same problems; neither met with any great success. As Goulart himself soon realised the reformation of behaviour was a slow and onerous, if not impossible, task. Whilst Goulart took an aggressive and strident line against immorality he had no expectations of improvement. Man, we are left believing, was a naturally corrupt and sinful entity. In an bold, though rather speculative statement, Robert Kingdon wrote, 'After the Reformation, by the seventeenth-century, behaviour in Geneva had changed dramatically. A new lifestyle had developed that was sober and austere, that contained characteristics we in the

Anglo-Saxon world have come to label puritan'.<sup>222</sup> Unfortunately, a closer look at the opinions of seventeenth-century Geneva itself presents a considerably darker picture. Even a cursory glance at Goulart's writings, a man who spent over sixty years in Geneva, leaves us with an impression of the city far removed from this ideal.<sup>223</sup> These were, of course, timeless concerns, as relevant to our own society as they were to Goulart's own community.

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<sup>222</sup> Kingdon, 'Calvin and the establishment of the consistory', p.167.

<sup>223</sup> According to contemporaries, nor were the French Reformed particularly reformed in their behaviour. When John Locke travelled around France during the later seventeenth century he commented that the morality of the Reformed was no different from their Catholic neighbours. he wrote, 'Mr. Bertheau told me that there was little piety or religion among their peoples and that the lives of the Reformed was no better than that of the papists'. See Philip Benedict, The Huguenot Population of France (Philadelphia, 1994), p.1f.

### **CHAPTER THREE:**

#### **FROM THE EARTHLY TO THE CELESTIAL**

##### **Introduction**

The early modern period remained unexceptional in its continued belief in the power and meaning of spectacular occurrences such as thunderstorms, an eclipse of the sun or a comet.<sup>224</sup> All were believed to be indicators of God's power and will. As Goulart asserted, it was through these remarkable historical occurrences that man could learn the true ways of God. Even more outrageous in their appearance were monstrous births, again assumed to an indication of God's will. Even miscarriages of justice became a further sign of God's power over humanity. Whilst Goulart saw God as a remote, often vengeful and possessive force, he believed that the Lord witnesses our every action and deed. Unnatural occurrences were simply tangible and awesome proof of God's often dark and forbidding presence. As Dudley Wilson recently stated, God was '...an awesome, a terrible and threatening presence, expressing himself directly through mutilation and disasters, storms and earthquakes, comets and other apparitions in the sky...'<sup>225</sup> Once again, however, Goulart deepens our understanding of a fascinating and complex argument.

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<sup>224</sup> Goulart seems to hark back to the classical period in his belief that only certain members of the community had the ability to read these signs. As he showed in the Histoires Admirables the failure to understand these messages was often fatal.

<sup>225</sup> Dudley Wilson, Signs and Portents: Monstrous Births from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment (London, 1993), p.3. The secondary literature on monstrous births and other such phenomena is excellent. On the controversy surrounding one particular monstrous birth see David Cressy, 'De la fiction des archives? Ou des monstre de 1569', Annales ESC, 5 (1993), 1309 - 1329. On birth in general see the excellent article by Ulinka Rublack, 'Childbirth and the Female Body in Early Modern Germany', Past and Present, 150 (1996), 84-110. On the monstrous in general see David Williams,

Whilst God was clearly not a visible entity on earth, the Lord made himself known through a variety of natural phenomena. The birth of a monstrous child, a violent thunderstorm, an eclipse of the sun or moon, or more spectacularly a comet, were greeted by Goulart and many others with fear and trepidation. Such events were believed to be a direct warning from God, a physical manifestation of his overwhelming power. All man had to do was interpret these signs accurately. Diverse interpretations were given for these phenomena, variously an impending military attack, a warning of an outbreak of plague, even a general warning against the immorality of society. A more obvious sign of God's displeasure was the inevitability that corruption and brutality in the judicial system would be punished. Goulart warned that all who perverted the laws of their country, causing the death of an innocent, would themselves be the target of divine justice. Furthermore, as Goulart related in his numerous historical works, the injustices committed against the Reformed would never go unpunished. Out of their deaths justice would prevail. At a time when the Reformed continued to suffer persecution, the knowledge or hope that their persecutors would be punished was crucial.<sup>226</sup> Events which we can now consider and explain rationally, were often treated with fear and uncertainty in the sixteenth century. In the absence of the rational, the superstitious was often the only answer.

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Deformed Discourse. The Fuction of the Monster in Medieval Thought and Literature (London, 1996). On celestial signs and protents see Dudley Wilson, Signs and Portents.

<sup>226</sup> In the Histoire des martyrs Goulart even went on to suggest that some Huguenots were legitimately murdered during the massacres. It was pay back for various sins which they had committed. One such individual was a professor called Pierre Ramus who was murdered during the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre. He was, according to Goulart, murdered by his student. He wrote, '...le corps fouetté par quelques escholiers induits par leurs maistres, au grand opprobre des bonnes lettres dot Ramus faifoit profession.' See p.714f. Furthermore, two of the most notorious kings in France who were condemned by Protestants for their acts of persecution, Henry II and Henry III both suffered painful deaths. Henry II was, of course, killed during a jousting tournament, whilst Henry III was murdered following the deaths of the cardinal and duc de Guise.

### Monstrous Births: Definitions and Causes

The sixteenth century has often been heralded as a transitional period, a time during which more rational explanations were sought for a wide range of occurrences, including monstrous births. Yet, judging from Goulart's Histoires Admirables the superstitious and the rational were often brought together. Even when Goulart brought a more sceptical eye, the moral of the tale remained valid. Without ever dismissing the superstitious Goulart did consider a more rational approach. As in Amboise Paré's famous work on monsters, Des monstres et prodiges, a variety of reasons were given. Monsters, it would seem, had both multiple causes and multiple explanations. Amongst the most common explanations were the mother's overactive imagination; punishment of parental sin; a physical sign of God's presence; an hereditary abnormality; the pregnant mother's unsatisfied food cravings or a physical or mental attack on the expectant mother.<sup>227</sup> Whilst many explanations were advanced it is clear that both a rational and superstitious approach was taken. In either case it was an attempt to explain why the normal failed to occur. Furthermore, it is apparent that Goulart, like Paré before him, sought to distinguish between true monstrosity and feigned monstrosity. Many parents, it would seem, deliberately maimed their children in a desperate attempt to make money, whilst others claimed that they had survived years without eating or drinking.<sup>228</sup> Complicating things still further, Paré often

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<sup>227</sup> In fact in the Des monstres et prodiges Paré listed thirteen reasons why monsters were born: the glory of God; God's wrath; too great a quantity of seed; too little seed; the imagination; the narrowness of the womb; the indecent posture of pregnant women; a fall or blow whilst pregnant; hereditary illness; rotten seed; artifice; mingling of seed and lastly the devil. See p.3f.

<sup>228</sup> Goulart was, in particular, outraged by the belief in the reality of lycanthropy. He was convinced that no individual could shape-shift, that it was in their imagination. Such people, Goulart contended, were mentally ill. See Histoires Admirables, vols. 1 & 2, p.324. In true cases Goulart often supplied



considered truly natural phenomena as legitimate examples of monstrosity.<sup>229</sup>

Goulart, Paré and others sought to distinguish between these true and false cases. Far from making circumspect the miraculous nature of the supposedly genuine cases, it served to make them even more remarkable and fantastic.

There can be no doubt that Goulart truly believed in the reality of monsters. They were more than a useful warning or figure of speech. As both Goulart and Paré explained there were both true and false cases of monstrosity. Whilst Goulart certainly condemned superstition, he did not consider that monsters and other miraculous occurrences, including celestial signs, were in themselves superstitious. If interpreted correctly they were a true and tangible sign of God's power over mankind. He believed that the falsification of monstrosity was deceptive and dishonest, an attempt to diminish the power of God. By revealing these false cases of monstrosity, Goulart hoped to emphasise the terrifying and awesome power that God maintained over man in verifiable cases of monstrosity. His criticism, however, did not lead him towards total disbelief in the significance of monstrosity. He truly believed in the reality of monstrosity, even when it is clear that many of the tales themselves were falsified. Whilst the beliefs which underlined these tales are easily dismissed in the late twentieth century, many early modern commentators welcomed monsters as a sign from God. Goulart was aware that money could be made from the show of various malformations and he understood the ways in which monstrosity could be falsified, but having

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evidence. In one such case a girl called Apolline Schryer stopped eating, although she continued to look healthy. After several years she was sent to a hospital and closely observed. No one could find any evidence of foul play. Goulart wrote, 'Ils n'y ont desouuert artifice ...' See *Histoires Admirables*, vols. 1 & 2, p.565f.

<sup>229</sup> Paré considered, for example, that flying fish were truly monstrous creatures. For further examples see Paré, *Des monstres et prodiges*, p.107ff.

examined these cases it served only to make him even more convinced that the remaining tales were authentic. In a number of incidents where monstrosity is falsified Goulart does attempt to indicate that proof was sought before the person in question was condemned. Often, in cases where an individual claimed that they had served years without eating or drinking they were taken to a hospital or given close supervision in order to establish the veracity of their claim. Ultimately, there were no hard and fast rules.

Whilst monstrous births were, of course, a valuable source of entertainment, enduring in its popularity and fascination, these tales also taught valuable moral lessons. By considering events which were seemingly unnatural, nature itself was made all the more real and demanding. Entertainment and edification were inextricably tied in these tales, the moral an integral part of the story. One difficulty was, of course, the problem of definition. What, for example, constituted a monstrous birth? Many children were born without a leg or an arm, but did this make them monstrous?

In his Des monstres et prodiges Paré explained that 'Monsters are things that appear outside the course of nature (and are usually signs of some coming misfortune) such as a child born with one arm...' Even more fantastic, Paré declared, were marvels. Marvels he asserted '...are things which happen that are completely against nature as when a woman will give birth to a serpent'. A marvel was, by definition, contrary to nature, on the tenuous boundary between the normal and the abnormal. One of the most succinct definitions was Isidore of Seville's. She declared that, 'Varo says that monsters are things which seem to

have been born contrary to nature, but in truth they are not contrary to nature because they exist by the divine will, since the creator's will is the nature of everything created...' In contrast she states that, 'Portents are also called signs, monstrosities and prodigies because they seem to portend and to point out, to demonstrate and to predict future happenings'.<sup>230</sup> Whilst celestial prodigies were set apart from monstrous births and defects, it is clear that all such events occurred on God's orders and demands, witnesses of his judgement. Indeed, in the Histoires Admirables such a distinction is made between celestial prodigies and monstrous births. Beyond this, the devil was often blamed by Goulart for causing monstrous births, appearing as an agent of God, sent to punish and warn humankind. Furthermore, the devil himself often appeared in a monstrous guise, a mockery of monstrosity in the human world.<sup>231</sup>

In his two works, Certain Secret Wonders of Nature and Theatre of the World, Pierre Boaistuau, like Goulart and Paré, gave his own interpretation of the difference between the abnormal and the monstrous. In a telling phrase he wrote, '...some children are borne so monster like and deformed that they are not like men, but abominable monsters...'<sup>232</sup> Despite this definition, like Goulart and Paré, he considered that Siamese twins were so monstrous that they were frequently put on show by their parents, doubtless in order to raise money. Even more telling is Boaistuau's striking assertion that monsters were, beyond any doubt, physical manifestations of God's anger and judgement, a fearful and tangible warning to

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid, p.13.

<sup>231</sup> See Histoires Admirables, vols. 1 & 2, p.287f. Here, for example, a man shouted that he hoped that his unborn child would go the devil. The child was, of course, born monstrous. Often the devil himself was easily recognisable, taking on a monstrous form. In one example the devil was 'En cest estrif il apperçoit que l'esranger auoit au lieu de doigts des pattes & griffes, comme d'oiseau de proye...' See p.45.

mankind. He wrote, 'It is most certaine, that these monstrous creatures, for the most part do proceede of the iudgement, iustice, chastisement and curse of God, which suffreth that the fathers and mothers bring forth these abominations, as a horreur of sinne...'<sup>233</sup> Boaistuaue supports this assertion with numerous examples, many of which bear a striking similarity to the examples used earlier by Paré and later by Goulart. Once again it is apparent that the same body of texts and examples were used over a period of almost one hundred years in order to illustrate and lend literary weight to a series of similar moralising examples.

Monsters, it was believed, could serve as either a particular or a general warning. On occasion a whole community was sent a portent, perhaps indicating an impending military or political disaster. Sometimes warnings were sent to individuals, perhaps cautioning against an adulterous affair or a life given over to gambling and drink, two great social evils. In the Histoires Admirables individuals were encouraged to reflect on their own particular circumstances in order to ascertain the causes of the monstrous birth. In Goulart's tales, however, the cause is always made apparent. Often, the greater the sin the greater the degree of monstrosity.<sup>234</sup> Where no cause was apparent, it was considered that misbirths were simply a general warning from God: a reminder of his power to manipulate and control nature. From works of entertainment, to more learned and serious works, monstrous births held an enduring fascination.

Accounts of the births themselves tended to fall into several categories, with varying degrees of credibility. Siamese twins and hermaphrodites were amongst

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<sup>232</sup> Boaistuaue, Theatre of the World (London, 1574), p.49.

the most common monstrous births. Others included children born with one or more missing or surplus limbs. Some were apparently born with incomplete faces, for example a nose or mouth was found wanting. Beyond these credible incidents, other accounts moved into the realm of fiction and fantasy. Goulart, Paré and Boaistuau, amongst others, described children born with the faces of dogs and frogs, whilst some were so monstrous they defied description and interpretation. Such 'children' were either dead when they were born, or killed by the midwife on delivery. Even Aristotle declared that such births were simply not possible, and yet these tales persisted throughout and beyond the sixteenth century.<sup>235</sup>

### **Monsters and Contemporary Literature**

Simon Goulart was not the only writer during the early modern period interested in and concerned about monstrous births and celestial occurrences. It was a subject of enduring popularity, both for its entertainment and its moral value. Amongst the most famous of all these writers was Amboise Paré, in particular in his Des monstres et prodiges, a work dedicated to explaining monstrous birth and prodigal signs. Many of the tales collected by Paré were later incorporated into Goulart's Histoires Admirables. Amongst the examples common to both writers was the alleged birth of a monstrous child in Rome during 1523. So monstrous was this child that it could only be described as half human, half

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid, p.12f.

<sup>234</sup> Wilson, Signs and Portents, p.36.

<sup>235</sup> See Histoires Admirables, vols. 3 & 4, p.621. Tale of a child who was born to a captain and his wife. The first child which she gave birth to was so monstrous that the mother killed it immediately. The second child which was born shortly after, whilst normal, did not live. Apparently it was so traumatised after being in the womb with a monster for nine months.

fish.<sup>236</sup> Likewise, they both told of a monster born with a horn on its head, two wings, a single foot like a bird of prey, human knee joints and one eye which appeared in 1512, shortly before the battle of Ravenna.<sup>237</sup> This was identified as a warning to France and Italy during the Italian wars, an indication of the terrors that had been and the terrors to come. Such phenomena were a tangible sign of His ability to distort and alter nature. In 1493, for example, a child which was half man and half dog was born, perhaps a further unheeded warning of the terrors to come in the wars against Italy.<sup>238</sup> Although these tales clearly have more in common with fiction rather than established fact, Paré informs his readers that he had actually viewed many of these monsters in Paris. Illustrations of various monsters were also included in the Des monstres et prodigies, as though Paré believed that this would lend a greater intellectualism to the study, with his detailed physiological descriptions. Fiction is, quite simply, presented as established fact.

One of the most interesting and instructive contemporary tales concerning physical defects concerned a man who was born blind. Many years later his sight was miraculously restored by Christ. When asked the cause of his blindness, Christ informed the man that he had been born blind in order to magnify God's power and glory. It was not, therefore, a punishment for the sins of his mother and father. He was a living example of God's ability to control and manipulate nature.<sup>239</sup> This was a clear indication that some individuals were born with a disability in order to glorify God's power over nature. Beyond this, in a tale

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<sup>236</sup> Histoires Admirables, vols. 3 & 4, p.112 and Paré, Des monstres et prodigies, p.67.

<sup>237</sup> Histoires Admirables, vols. 3 & 4, p.49f and Paré Des monstres et prodigies, p.67f.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid*, p.67ff.

<sup>239</sup> Paré, Des monstres et prodigies, p.4.



which has much in common with Goulart's collection, is Boaistuau's repeated assertion that monsters were often born to honourable and God-fearing parents, a symbol of collective rather than individual sin. One such child was born to parents in Poland during the 1540s. It had eyes the colour of fire, a nose like an elephant, two ape-like heads and a navel fashioned like a cat's eye. Apparently the monster died within four hours, but left this world with a warning that the Lord commeth.<sup>240</sup> Whilst the veracity of such a tale must be treated with caution, the moralising, instructive and entertaining value of the tale cannot be in doubt. Goulart, like Paré and Boaistuau intended such tales to illustrate the close relationship which he believed existed between monsters and the Lord's judgement. Whilst Goulart was certain that many monstrous births were falsified, in his mind this only served to enhance the significance of 'true' monstrosity. Goulart, like Paré and Boaistuau, was in no doubt that monstrous births were a visible warning of God's presence and power.

Amongst the most influential of all sixteenth-century writers in France was Michel de Montaigne, a source frequently used by Goulart. Like Goulart, Montaigne seemed certain that monsters were a visible and tangible indication of God's authority over the human world, an impression which he discussed at length in his *Essais*.<sup>241</sup> Like Paré before him, Montaigne claimed that he had actually witnessed several monsters. One was a malformed shepherd and the other Siamese twins. The boy, Montaigne explained, appeared normal except that a second child emanated from his chest. Of this bizarre birth Montaigne wrote, 'This double head and these sundry limbs all depending on a single head could

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid, p.16.

well provide us with a favourable omen that our king will maintain the sundry parties and factions of our state in unity under his laws...<sup>242</sup> Montaigne was seemingly exceptional in his belief that monsters could be considered a favourable omen. He went on to argue, like Goulart, that monsters were not in fact contrary to nature, but integral to nature, being as they were further signs of the variety of forms within the world. Nothing God created, Montaigne stated, could be contrary to nature, defects were a reassertion of the Lord's overwhelming power over His creation. From Goulart's own tales there can be little doubt that he would have agreed with Montaigne's conclusion.

### **Monsters and Parents**

The significance of the monstrous in the terms of sin and divine punishment has been well-known from the classical period onwards. The explanations discussed by sixteenth and seventeenth-century writers were in reality far more complex and diverse than those earlier advanced. One of the least discussed causes of monstrous births, but one considered at length by Goulart, was the power and impact of a pregnant woman's imagination. Far from being an isolated object, sixteenth-century writers believed that the foetus was able to empathise with and react to all the mother could see, hear and imagine. As a consequence, pregnant mothers were warned to curb their fantasies, lest their unborn child were deformed as a consequence. It was truly believed, even by many civil authorities, that what a pregnant woman saw and considered could have a detrimental effect on the unborn child. As a consequence, therefore, several German towns during

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<sup>241</sup> Montaigne, *Essais*, p.806.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid*, p.808.

the fifteenth and sixteenth-centuries ordered all deformed and shockingly ill people to be removed from the streets in order to protect their pregnant residents. In other towns pregnant women were advised not to attend public hangings lest the shock caused either a miscarriage or a monstrous birth. Beggars in late fifteenth-century Nuremburg were ordered to hide their malformed limbs out of consideration for pregnant women.<sup>243</sup> As Jacques Gélis writes, 'It was generally believed that during pregnancy the child saw what the mother saw, heard what she heard and felt what she felt'.<sup>244</sup> Again, Goulart's own perceptive and incisive discussion lends depth to this frequently discussed contemporary argument.

Beyond this explanation it was also believed that anger and violence could result in a miscarriage or a monstrous birth. Husbands, in particular, were constantly warned to refrain from hitting their wives during pregnancy. Writers, like Goulart, feared that the fragile equilibrium in the womb could become dangerously unbalanced. If driven to anger it was believed that the hot flow of the woman's blood could swamp the foetus and cause a miscarriage. If shocked, however, it was considered that the blood could drain away from the foetus and the unborn child would die from starvation.<sup>245</sup> Throughout pregnancy, the foetus was in constant danger, the unborn child being able to react to anger and fear directed towards it. Goulart described several such shocking births.

As Goulart indicated in the Histoires Admirables some monstrous births were caused by the sins of the father. In one instance, a husband had left his pregnant

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<sup>243</sup> Ulinka Rublack, 'Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Female Body in Early Modern Germany', in Past and Present, 150-153 (1996), 84-110, at p.96.

<sup>244</sup> Jacques Gélis, History of Childbirth. Fertility, Pregnancy and Birth in early Modern Europe, trans. Rosemary Morris (Cambridge, 1991), p.53.

wife for the pleasures of the tavern. His unseemly and sinful behaviour, Goulart asserted, led directly to the birth of a monstrous child. It was a just and fitting punishment from God. As Goulart made clear, children were made to suffer for the sins of their parents.<sup>246</sup> Nor were such accounts limited to works of fiction. As Ulinka Rublack has shown, in 1562 a woman from Constance accused her husband of betraying their marriage vows. It would appear that during her labour, the woman's husband preferred to remain in the tavern. She clearly feared that her husband's behaviour would adversely affect her unborn child.<sup>247</sup> Likewise, a husband who preferred the pleasures of the hunt to caring for his pregnant wife was punished when his wife gave birth to a child with the head of a dog.<sup>248</sup> A monstrous child left the parents with a physical and public sign of their guilt and sin.

One of the most famous of all monstrous births, dating from the sixteenth-century, captured the imaginations of both Paré and Goulart. In their versions the woman's powerful and overactive imagination was clearly the cause of this most bizarre of monstrous births. One night a woman, from near Fontainebleau, tied a live frog to her hand in the belief that this would aid her recovery from a fever. With the frog still tied to her hand, that night the woman conceived. Nine months later, when the baby was born, the child had the face of a frog. Two explanations could be given: first, that the woman's imagination had caused the birth or, as Goulart intimated, it was a punishment for her superstitious and irreligious

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<sup>245</sup> Ulinka Rublack, p.94.

<sup>246</sup> Goulart, *Histoires Admirables*, vol. 3 & 4, p.68. Another tale also made clear that children were made to suffer the consequences of parental sin. In this incident a woman was giving evidence in court and, as part of her defence, claimed that if she was guilty she hoped her son would never speak again. Several days later her son was blind and death. See volumes 1 & 2, p.286f.

<sup>247</sup> Rublack, 'Pregnancy', p.100.

beliefs.<sup>249</sup> As Goulart knew all too well from his work as a pastor, superstitious beliefs were exceptionally difficult to eradicate, and yet he himself gave credence to such tales because they provided immensely powerful warnings to mankind. Goulart strongly suggests that the woman should not have resorted to folk medicine, despite the time-honoured tradition of such practices. Instead, her faith in God should have been sufficient to overcome the illness. In a similar tone, Paré cast judgement on all who gave birth to a child which was part animal, part human. Such births, he warned, were symbolic of God's warning and judgement. Paré wrote, '...such monsters often come from the pure will of God, to warn us of the misfortunes with which we are threatened of some great disorder...'<sup>250</sup>

Not only was it believed that the overactive imagination of the mother could lead to a monstrous birth, an insatiable craving for the most outlandish foodstuffs was also believed to have disastrous consequences. An unfulfilled craving for strawberries, for example, could result in the child being born with a strawberry birthmark. Indeed, the French word for craving, *envie*, can also mean birthmark. Once again, the superstitious, in the absence of any substantiated proof, explained a natural occurrence. Another common notion during the sixteenth-century were the supposed cannibalistic fantasies of pregnant women. Sometimes their desire for human flesh was so great that they would even murder their own husband. These unnatural desires were believed to have an impact on the foetus. Goulart reports that one woman was so desperate for some meat that she grabbed a piece her butcher was weighing. The butcher refused to give her the meat because it had been requested by another customer. In her anguish and desperation the

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<sup>248</sup> Beard, *A Collection of Histories*, p.195.

woman's nose began to bleed. The blood which fell onto her mouth was believed to have been the cause of her child's abnormality: its upper lip was missing.<sup>251</sup> It is clear that the child was deformed because of the mother's unsatisfied craving. Goulart went on to state that pregnant women demanded to eat the strangest substances. Raw meat aside, they also demanded ashes, coal, plaster and raw figs. As Goulart made clear, if left unsatisfied, a woman's cravings had fearful consequences for the unborn child. If Goulart is to be believed, almost no one remained in the world who was unable to tell their own tale of their strange appetites of pregnant women. He wrote 'Il n'y a presque personne au monde, qui ne fache quelques histoires particulieres des extraordinaires appetits de certaines femmes enceintes...' Furthermore, Goulart argued, such would revealed God's glory. He asserted, '...de reuerer Dieu en tant de merueilles'.<sup>252</sup> Once again, the foetus was fully able to respond to the demands and desires of their mother, in tune with her thoughts and demands.

Just as the imagination was believed to have a detrimental effect on the unborn child, Goulart also indicated that foetal abnormalities could be formed as a consequence of parental hatred. In one incident Goulart tells of a good and honest woman who was married to a Spaniard. Whilst she was pregnant, her husband intimated that he wanted to stab his unborn child to death, adding his wish that the child would go to the devil. Inevitably, the child was born seriously deformed, a visible reminder of the father's unnatural hatred and aversion. Quoting from

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<sup>249</sup> Goulart, *Histoires Admirables*, p.259. See also Pare, *Des Monstres et Prodiges*, p.41.

<sup>250</sup> Paré, *Des monstres et prodiges*, p.5f.

<sup>251</sup> Goulart, *Histoires Admirables*, volumes 1 & 2, p.67. In the same volumes Goulart also told of a pregnant woman who had allegedly bit the neck of a man but her craving was far from satiated. Her child was born dead. See p.65.

<sup>252</sup> See *Histoires Admirables*, vols. 1 & 2, p.65ff.



Plato, Goulart asserted in his conclusion to the tale that a child had no greater fear than a father's curse.<sup>253</sup> This tale also emphasised the vitriolic anti-Spanish hatred of many Protestant writers throughout this period. Even more exemplary and hard-hitting is the tale included in the final volume of the Histoires Admirables. Rather than fulfil his duties within the home a husband spent all his time in the tavern, leaving his pregnant wife alone, without money, food or support. He refused to reform his behaviour. As a consequence, she gave birth to a child which was so monstrous that the baby was immediately strangled. There can be no doubt that this monster represented God's judgement.<sup>254</sup> Whilst few, if any, of the tales collected in the Histoires Admirables actually occurred, the exemplary moral behaviour indicated remained of paramount importance. Goulart warned that no man who lived a life of pleasure would make a suitable husband or father. He would be unable to fulfil his duties to educate and provide for his child. As Goulart illustrated above, God's judgement was true and to be feared.

### **Celestial Phenomena**

Beyond malfunctions in the human world, Goulart believed that celestial phenomena were invaluable signs of the Lord's power over mankind, as much a symbol of human sin as an indication of God's historical purpose. Not surprisingly, therefore, an eclipse of the sun, a comet and even a thunderstorm were all considered legitimate signs. Furthermore, as Denis Crouzet asserts in his detailed work on sixteenth-century France, French literature during this period was replete with such examples. In part, Crouzet considered, this identified a

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<sup>253</sup> Goulart, Histoires Admirables, vols. 1 & 2, p.287.

<sup>254</sup> Goulart, Histoires Admirables, vols. 3 & 4, p.68.

culture convinced that the end of the world was imminent.<sup>255</sup> The Histoires Admirables lends weight to this argument.

Many examples used by Goulart in the Histoires Admirables have an obvious historical connection. Furthermore, so great was the importance which Goulart placed on such phenomena that in his preface to the 1600 edition he implored his readers to keep a record of similar events as they occurred, thereby serving as warnings to future generations. Many of the celestial marvels described by Goulart relate to the life and reign of Charles V. On the day that Charles was born, for example, a comet could be seen across Europe. Moreover, on the day that he was crowned Holy Roman Emperor, Goulart informs his readers that various celestial aberrations could be seen. A less obvious portent was seen over Münster in 1529. It was alleged that an armed knight could be seen running through the air. Although not stated by Goulart, it can be assumed that this represented a warning to the inhabitants of the city of the disasters which would befall them during 1534 and 1535.<sup>256</sup> Only with the benefit of hindsight, however, did the meaning become obvious.

Even more striking, according to Goulart, was the comet which appeared in 1506, a spectacle which placed the fear of God into all who witnessed this marvel. Indeed, as Goulart indicated, this comet had a three-fold explanation: during this year the Turks were defeated by the Persians, civil war broke out in the Ottoman Empire and the duke of Milan was taken captive by the French.<sup>257</sup> As Crouzet rightly suspected, many sixteenth-century writers, like Goulart, were consumed

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<sup>255</sup> Denis Crouzet, Les Guerriers de Dieu (Paris, 1990).

by a profound sense of fear, uncertainty and human failure. With every year that passed new reports and projections were published predicting the end of the world. Political and religious turmoil served to exacerbate these pre-existing tensions and strains.

Comets were, according to Goulart, indicators of political, social and religious developments. In 1527, again in Germany, a comet appeared, apparently so terrifying that many died from fear. Above the comet a crooked arm was seen holding a sword, on either side of which were battle axes, daggers and swords, all the familiar regalia of war. This was a clear reminder of the terrors of the recent Peasants War, as well as the horrors to come.<sup>258</sup> Furthermore an eclipse of the sun was considered a particularly evil omen, often portending disease and death. In a compelling description of this vision, Goulart wrote that, 'L'an 1518 au mois de Iuin, vne horrible eclipse de Soleil fut suiuite à la mesme heure d'un terrible embrasement de feu à Vienne en Autriche, lequel brusla vn quartier de la ville. L'empereur Maximilian I. estant avec sa cour à Insbruk tomba malade entendant ceste nouuelle...'<sup>259</sup> Following the eclipse, Goulart claims that Vienna was destroyed by fire, an incident which was more than coincidence. There can be no doubt that Goulart truly believed that various phenomena which appeared in the sky, if properly interpreted, were harbingers of God's providence and judgement. In an unequivocal statement Goulart asserted, 'Nous disons seulement que

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<sup>256</sup> Goulart, *Histoires Admirables*, p.51.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid, p.116.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid, p.116.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid, p.183.

souuentesfois les cometes semblent estre comme les auant - coureurs & trompettes de ces merueilleux iugemens du Souuerain...'<sup>260</sup>

Whilst Goulart frequently condemned many of the superstitious and time-honoured traditions still practised by the Reformed, he obviously considered that the interpretation of natural phenomena could provide a visible and tangible sign of the future.<sup>261</sup> What is striking in Goulart's work is the delay which was often apparent between the appearance of the portent and the disaster occurring. Indeed, several years could go by without the predicted disaster taking place. One example from the Histoires Admirables illustrates this difficulty. In 1523 a peasant slept in a field overnight. During the night he saw a terrifying image in the sky: two princes were fighting, the taller one was killed and the smaller man seized the crown. Three years later the King of Hungary and Bohemia was slain on the field of Mohacs., a considerable time lapse between the portent and the battle.<sup>262</sup> The belief that God's judgement and will could be interpreted and discerned from celestial signs and storms, a notion already hundreds of years old, was also confirmed by Boaistuau. He warned that all should take heed of these signs, that they were God's message to mankind, '...he holdes in his hand, calles us, warneth us and will us to returne to hym, showing by sickness and particular affiliations, sometimes by signes and wordes which...be messengers, trumpets and forerunners of his iustice...'<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid, p.114.

<sup>261</sup> See Histoires Admirables, vols. 1 & 2, p.48.

<sup>262</sup> Beard even believed that a thunderclap could reveal the power and presence of God. See his A Collection of Histories, p.140.

<sup>263</sup> Boaistuau, Certain Secret Wonders of Nature, p.4f.

Celestial signs were often taken by Goulart to be a direct condemnation of the community as a whole rather than the particular sins of mankind. Goulart reports that during a terrifying storm in Germany around 1559 a woman, her four sons and their maid tried to protect themselves from the storm. Fearing that the end of the world was near, the woman sought comfort in prayers to God, begging for His mercy. Suddenly, Satan appeared in the storm, aiming the force of the lightning at the family, indicating the very real battle which was being fought between God and the devil. So great was the woman's faith in God, however, that she was protected and saved; the lightning was deflected by angels. Goulart wrote, '*Satan semblent meslé parmi cest orage, & confondu par la priere ardente de ceste petite troupe, eslance vne grosse poultre de douze coudees...Mais le saints Anges destournerent le coup...*'<sup>264</sup> In part, at least, this tale illustrates the battle for men's souls which continued between good and evil. It was as though the storm was sent by God in order to test the faith and courage of humankind. This woman was clearly rewarded for the strength of her faith. There is no insinuation that this woman had committed a particular crime, more that she served as a useful mechanism with which to convey the central importance of faith. Above all this tale emphasised the frequently voiced notion that the end of the world was imminent. As the woman in the tale learnt to her benefit, only a resolute faith in God could protect mankind from imminent disaster and devastation.

Rarely a protective and appealing figure, the God represented in the Histoires Admirables is very much a God of the Old Testament. Here was a god who had to be appeased and consoled, jealous of any competition, who apparently set man

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid, p.137f.

against man in order to instruct humankind and emphasise His power and authority. He even went to the extreme of enlisting Satan to punish mankind. His was a ubiquitous but unpredictable authority, a demanding and always volatile element in society. As the inhabitants of a French town discovered to their cost, they were all punished by God for condoning a sinful relationship, unrecognised by the law of the church. In this example the whole town shared responsibility for the marriage of the couple and were punished when a terrifying storm ripped through the town.<sup>265</sup>

In a second similar example, set in Spain during 1560, a sudden storm developed as two men were out walking in the countryside. During the storm one of the men went missing. When he was found, some time later, his bones were broken and his tongue missing. Goulart wrote, ‘...que cest homme estoit vn iureru & blasphemateur ordinaire: pourtant auoit - il esté chastité particulièrement en ce membre, dont il s’estoit serui à deshonorer son Createur’.<sup>266</sup> This was a striking punishment from God, an appropriate death for a man believed by many to have been a blasphemer. Once again, Goulart made clear the moral purpose of the tale. Goulart had, after all, mastered this moralising and edifying style in his earlier Histoire des martyrs.<sup>267</sup> Goulart left his readers with no doubt that God’s punishment of mankind was far from random. In both works, Goulart emphasised that sin, both particular and general, would be punished. In a world full of fear

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid, p.243.

<sup>266</sup> p.245.

<sup>267</sup> In the Histoire des martyrs it was clear that the deaths of hundreds of men, women and children who had died for their faith would be used as moral examples, emphasising the importance of faith and constancy. In one such example one of the Reformed from Meaux was promised that her life would be spared if they would go to mass. The woman refused. If she had done so she would have been a Nicodemite, a practise explicitly condemned by Calvin. Of this woman Goulart wrote ‘Vne autre femme dvn bonnetier, nommé Nicolas, fut trainee pour aller à la messe: mais elle detestoit cela tout hautement: ce qui irrita tellement les meutriers...’ See Histoire des martyrs (? , 1582), p.717f .



and uncertainty Goulart did little to console man's anxieties. Only through a careful study of the past would man deepen his knowledge of God. Goulart, it would seem, had little reassurance and even less comfort to offer.

### **Justice**

Justice is one of the most powerful and comprehensive of all the themes discussed in the Histoires Admirables, a subject which fascinated contemporary writers. Justice was integral to notions of order and government. Specific tales serve as warnings not only against injustice, but more controversially against the persistent and often illegal use of torture. Goulart was certain that God would punish all who knowingly perverted the course of justice. These ideas were forcefully reiterated throughout the Histoires Admirables.<sup>268</sup>

Torture, Goulart indicated, was the principle cause of injustice. Whilst he certainly did not condemn the use of torture entirely, it is clear that he believed torture was misapplied, typically in cases where there was little or no evidence against the suspect. Moreover, in many such cases, the use of torture was clearly illegal. Furthermore, Goulart made clear his belief that the men who had trained and were employed to ensure that the law was carried out, who acted as the king's representative in the provinces, were the very people who misapplied the law and perverted the course of justice. The dangers inherent in a system which was dependent upon the use of torture were made clear, torture forcing people to

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<sup>268</sup> From his position as a pastor, Goulart condemned the prevailing judicial system in Geneva. In one particular episode Goulart's criticism of the judicial system almost resulted in a prison sentence. He believed that a woman found guilty, Mme de Juranville was innocent, a victim of injustice. On this episode see the Registres, vol.VII, p.25f.

admit to crimes which they could not and did not commit. In one tale, a man was tortured to such an extent that he remained a cripple for the rest of his life.<sup>269</sup> Goulart repeatedly warned that a judge should take no action against a suspect unless the evidence was clearer than day. He wrote, '...estant requis es proces criminels que les preuues soyent euidentes & plus claire que le iour'.<sup>270</sup> He believed that had torture not been employed, the lives of many innocent people would have been saved.

In a moving passage Montaigne argued against the use of torture, doubtless sharing his opinions with Goulart.<sup>271</sup> Montaigne wrote, 'Torture is a dangerous innovation; it would appear that it is an assay not of the truth but of a man's endurance...'<sup>272</sup> Montaigne continued, 'What would you not say, what would you not do, to avoid such grievous pain? Pain compels even the innocent to lie...Thousands upon thousands have falsely confessed to capital charges'.<sup>273</sup> Furthermore, Johann Weyer also strenuously opposed the use of torture. Weyer wrote, '...to be torn to pieces by the most varied methods of unspeakable torment, devised with intolerable tyranny...this bloody torture does not cease until they confess...'<sup>274</sup> A man's guilt or innocence would not and could not alter his ability to withstand pain. Indeed, as Goulart and other contemporaries constantly

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid, p.363.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid, p.295.

<sup>271</sup> It would seem more than likely that Goulart shared Montaigne's views on torture, not least because Goulart readily quoted Montaigne's views on justice and torture at length throughout the Histoires Admirables.

<sup>272</sup> Montaigne, Essais, p.414.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid, p.414. In fact, Montaigne went even further than Goulart in his condemnation of the actual penalties imposed on the guilty. He believed that anything more than the basic death sentence was cruel and unnecessary. Montaigne argued that if exemplary severity had to be used it should be against the dead, not the living, that this was deterrent enough. He wrote, 'I have a cruel hatred of cruelty...Such inhuman excesses should be directed against the dead bark, not the living tree'. p.480ff.

<sup>274</sup> Johann Weyer, Witches, Devils and Doctors in the Renaissance: Johann Weyer, De Praestigiis daemonum (New York, 1991), translated John Shea, p.490.

indicated, the justice system was fundamentally flawed, although none suggested an alternative. In a system which continued to assume that all suspects were guilty, the innocent who stood accused had no real opportunity to plead their case.

Goulart boldly confronted the use of torture in early seventeenth-century society. He recognised that torture was neither a useful deterrent nor a reliable method for discerning the truth. In one tale in particular an entirely innocent man was sentenced to death, despite a lack of evidence. He had, Goulart informs us, confessed to the murders because he had been brutally tortured and could endure the pain no longer. He wrote, 'La iustice s'apuyant sue quelques coniectures & rapports, se saisit de l'homme, & le gehenne si rudement, qu'il confesse auoir commis ce que iamais ne lui estoit venu en pensee'.<sup>275</sup> Several months later the real murderers were apprehended, and although arrested on different charges, confessed to their earlier crime. In a rare message of hope, however, Goulart believed that the death of an innocent victim would reveal that justice could and would prevail. This message was one which he was at pains to emphasise in the book of martyrs, a statement of hope to the families of victims in the wars and massacres in France. Many must have believed that the deaths of thousands of Huguenots had been in vain, without hope of retribution. Goulart considered otherwise: he believed that all who were guilty would be punished by God. It was a small message of hope and consolation, a sentiment repeated at length in the Histoires Admirables.

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid, p.295.

In the Histoires Admirables there are many examples of injustice, all ultimately ending with the punishment of the guilty. Doubtless this was a literary commonplace, but which served to emphasise the weaknesses inherent in the judicial system. Whilst God ultimately ensured that justice was done, the hand of God was often disguised, but always present. Even animals could serve as agents of God's will and purpose. In one such tale, three crows acted as servants of God, ensuring that a group of thieves and murderers were apprehended and punished.<sup>276</sup> Boaistuau wrote that so great was the importance of justice, that God even gave beasts the ability to identify murderers. He wrote, 'A thing miraculous wherein God doth show himself a just and righteous judge...that he hath murderers in so great detestation that he permitteth brute beasts to accuse them and shew them their vices'<sup>277</sup> Doubtless such tales were both memorable and instructive. One problem remained, however: Goulart left those responsible devoid of any remorse or guilt. Whilst they were certainly punished, those convicted learnt nothing from their crime.<sup>278</sup>

Goulart was clearly concerned that judges might be corrupt, open to bribes, but not open to the truth. One of his main points of concern was that the law was constantly perverted by the very people charged by the government to enforce justice. In several cases, for example, a judge sentenced on mere hearsay, without reliable witnesses or physical evidence. In France, at least, this went against

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<sup>276</sup> Goulart, Histoires Admirables p.90f. In this tale a German was murdered by a gang of thieves. Before he died he called upon some crows to act as his witnesses. The thieves simply laughed. Several days later the thieves spied the same group of crows, openly mocking the birds and boasting of their deeds. They were overheard, arrested and executed.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid, p.38f.

<sup>278</sup> One exception to this was the boy who falsely accused his father of bestiality in order to gain his inheritance. Before his death, the son was overwhelmed by guilt, knowing that he had caused the unnecessary death of his father. Ultimately, he fully accepted the enormity of his cruel and futile vendetta. See Histoires Admirables, vols. 1 & 2, p.302ff.

established judicial rules and practices. In one such case a husband was accused of murdering his partner. Whilst a body had been found there was no evidence that it was, in fact, his wife. Without witnesses or evidence the man was brutally tortured and, not surprisingly, confessed to the crime. For this man, as for many others, death was preferable to the agonies of prolonged torture. On the day that he was executed his wife returned home, safe and well.<sup>279</sup> This trial was, however, wrongly conducted. Having studied law himself, Goulart was all too aware that many had been tried and convicted in trials which were contrary to standard procedure in France. For the likes of Goulart and Montaigne, who opposed the use of torture, the problem remained that Roman canon law relied upon torture in order to secure a conviction, since it declared that two reliable witnesses were essential to secure conviction for a capital crime. The evidence of only one witness or circumstantial evidence was simply not adequate. In this situation, therefore, torture became a central and necessary part of the judicial process.<sup>280</sup> Quite simply torture was the only means by which a judge could obtain the evidence he needed to convict. But, even before torture could be employed, the law of half-proof had to be fulfilled: that is reasonable circumstantial evidence or one reliable eyewitness.<sup>281</sup> Beyond this, Goulart even maintained that a judge depended upon unreliable witnesses in order to secure a conviction. In one such case a judge even condemned a man to death on the evidence of two prisoners, a singularly illegal practice.<sup>282</sup> In many of the tales of

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid, p.295.

<sup>280</sup> In England, whilst there is no doubt that torture was used, it never became a central part of the judicial process. The law declared that a judge, using his reason and discretion, could convict on circumstantial evidence alone. As such, the need for torture was removed.

<sup>281</sup> On the subject of justice and the use of torture in France during the sixteenth century see John H. Langbein, *Torture and the Law of Proof* (London, 1977) and Raymond A. Menzter, 'The Self - Image of the Magistrate in Sixteenth-Century France', in *Criminal Justice History*, 5, 1984, 23 - 43.

<sup>282</sup> Goulart, *Histoires Admirables*, p.302f.

injustice detailed by Goulart basic legal practices were constantly bypassed. Furthermore, and perhaps of even greater significance for his tales, the law required a repetition of guilt by the accused following the cessation of torture. In the cases discussed by Goulart, the accused had retracted their confession after torture had ceased; a sentence of death should not, therefore, have been carried out. Either the accused should have been released or torture once again applied. As Johann Weyer argued, judges simply forced people to confess to what was impossible.<sup>283</sup>

Goulart was not unique in his attack on the judicial system, but in the context of his life and works, his condemnation is significant. Like Montaigne, Goulart was preoccupied by the most glaring flaws in the justice system, not least the corruption of the judges themselves. In one particular tale, the judge himself came under scrutiny. In 1537 a German soldier had committed a crime which only demanded a light sentence. The judges, realising that the soldier had access to a large sum of money demanded the entire sum in return for his life. The soldier refused, warning them not only against the shedding of innocent blood, but that if he died they would face the full fury of God's judgement. He asserted, '...Vous estes iuges iniques, qui pour complaire vos souuerains, ou pour auoir ma bourse, m'enuoyez au supplice...Redoutez le iuge, auquel rien, n'est caché, qui rendra à chacun selon ce qu'il aura fait, soit bien soit mal'.<sup>284</sup> The judges did not listen, however, and each faced a painful and protracted death as a consequence.

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<sup>283</sup> Weyer, *Witches, Devils and Doctors*, p.499.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid*, p.301f.



Goulart did little to disguise the fact that he viewed the judiciary with disdain. They were not even worthy enough to hold the title judge. In a forceful statement he wrote,

Les histoires de quelques Iuges non iuges, maus iugez desia deuant Dieu, deuant eux - mesmes, deuant les hommes, comme iuges, tres - iniques & detestables...Que les iniques continuent d'apprendre à ceux qui aiment le vrai honneur, la paix de leurs consciences, la glories de Dieu, la conseruation du droit à qu il apartient, de s'acquiter honnorablement & fidelement de leurs charges.<sup>285</sup>

In a similar outcry, Thomas Beard concurred with Goulart that the magistrate was far from impartial, driven as they were by bribery and corruption.<sup>286</sup> As Goulart and other sixteenth-century writers conveyed in such poignant detail, criticism against torture had begun long before the more famous cries of Voltaire during the Enlightenment.

### **Blasphemy and Belief**

It is apparent that Goulart, and many contemporary writers, believed that God manifested his power and authority in various ways. Whilst Goulart maintained that God protected the name, if not the life, of the innocent, he also believed that apostates and blasphemers were the greatest enemy of the Lord, and as such deserved no help or protection. Only those whose faith was constant, even in the face of the greatest adversity, would be given His guardianship and guidance. Indeed, when spoken by the faithful, God's name was so powerful that it was

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid, p.303.

<sup>286</sup> Beard, *A Collection of Histories*, sig.B2r Beard wrote, 'The noble and high minded are proud to disdain the lower...the magistrate partial and full of bribes...'

sufficient to disarm and confute the devil. In the Histoires Admirables Goulart sought to convey both the horrors of blasphemy and the ecstasy of true belief.

That Goulart perceived himself to be part of a crusade against Satan is clear from his preoccupation with ability and power of the devil to manipulate humankind. Furthermore, considering the series of prominent witchtrials in Geneva during his own lifetime, these were issues which would have touched Goulart deeply during his years as a pastor. Contemporaries perceived themselves embroiled in a battle with Satan,<sup>287</sup> a reality made clear from Goulart's Le Sage Vieillard. Here Goulart wrote, 'It is a continuall warre, where we daily do cope, grapple, and strive against the enemies, as well within as without, to wit, Sathan...' <sup>288</sup> In a famous example, taken from Weyer, Goulart tells of a divine from Wittenberg who, one night in 1546, was approached by a stranger. Having conversed on several contemporary religious controversies, the divine noticed that the man had the claws and talons of a bird of prey. The divine, driven and guided by his firm belief in God, read several powerful passages from the Bible as evidence against the stranger's blasphemies. Unable to compete with the true word of God the devil disappeared.<sup>289</sup> Goulart used the Histoires Admirables as a means of warning his reader that the devil was a very real danger to mankind in general. The only way man could resist the lure and power of the devil was to maintain a fundamental belief in God. Doubtless fears were exacerbated as a consequence of

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<sup>287</sup> That Goulart saw mankind in a struggle against Satan is clear from a letter which Goulart wrote to Beza from Tremilly, 'Monsieur de Tremilly a fort bon courage, grace à dieu: mais il a besoin d'estre secondé de quelqu'un pour respondre aux aduersaires, s'il en est besoin, et pour le fortifier de plus en plus contre une infinité d'alarmes que Satan lui donne pour l'esbronsler...' See Registres, vol.V, p.369.

<sup>288</sup> See Goulart, Le sage Vieillard, p.110.

<sup>289</sup> Goulart, Histoires Admirables, vols. 1 & 2, p.45. In response to the devil Goulart wrote, 'En cest estrif il apperçoit que l'esranger auoit au lieu de doigts des pattes & griffes, comme d'oiseau de proye...Escoute la sentence prononcee contre toi: (lui monstrant le passage du troisieme chapitre de

the many high profile cases in which suspected witches were accused of establishing a diabolical pact with the devil.

Goulart made clear that God was, at one and the same time, a benevolent and a destructive deity. More than any other group of people, Goulart asserted vehemently that non-believers and apostates were God's worst enemies. It was, therefore, the responsibility of every government to search out and destroy such heinous individuals. The most powerful example of God's hatred of apostates was the seemingly just and true destruction of Servetus.<sup>290</sup> It is clear that Goulart particularly detested this man, not simply because he preached heretical views, but because he had once known the true way of God, but had willingly deviated from and deserted the truth. Echoing Calvin's own sentiments, Goulart wrote in the Histoires Admirables that Servetus and other such heretics '...sont tous peris malheureusement, au regard de leurs ames premierement, & la pluspart aussi au regard de leurs corps...' and that 'Seruet esté bruslé vif, sans iamais vouloir reconoistre iesus Christ pour fils eternal de Dieu...sans abiuration ou detestation de leurs impietez detestables...'<sup>291</sup> Likewise, in a less familiar tale, a man considered an enemy of all Protestants was brought to his death. During the Peasants' War this man had allegedly killed hundreds of people, whilst robbing thousands of others. Devoid of any religious sensitivities he fell ill, cursing God. So wicked was this man that even during his hour of death he turned away from God, his only possible source of redemption. Goulart wrote, 'Quelques mois

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Genese) la semence de la femme briefera la teste du serpent...Le malin esprit tout confus, despité & grondant, disparut avec tresgrand bruit, laissant si puante odeur dedans le poisle...'

<sup>290</sup> Michael Servetus (1511 - 53). He was, in effect, an anti-Trinitarian, writing an infamous work called the Trinitatis Erroribus in 1531. Now a heretic, Servetus fled Spain for France, engaging in a fatal controversy with Calvin. On a visit to Geneva, Servetus was recognised, brought to trial and executed.

<sup>291</sup> Goulart, Histoires Admirables, vols. 1 & 2, p.267ff.

apres ceste furies, il roba malade & languit plusieurs iours d'une estrange & incurable douleur de reins, laquelle le precipite tellement en desespoir, qu'il ne cessa de despiter & renier son Createur, patient, iuste & redoubtable en ses vengeancees, iusques à ce que la parole lui faillit avec la vie.<sup>292</sup> There are many such examples in the Histoires Admirables.<sup>293</sup>

In a work that is often strikingly non-confessional, the Histoires Admirables includes only one markedly Calvinist doctrine: a discussion of the elect and the reprobate. He introduces this complex doctrine with simplicity and clarity. One man, on his death bed, was convinced that he would go to hell. So certain was this man that he would go to Satan that even before his death he could imagine the torments of hell. Goulart wrote, 'Car...il voyoit clairement deuant ses yeux tous les tourmens, toutes les peines des enfers & des danez, & oyoit des sentences redoutables en son ame, tiré deuant le siege iuducial de Iesus Christ'. Only the elect, this man believed, would be forgiven for their sins.. He asserted,

Protestoit auoir est quelquefois en ceste pensee, que ses pechez estoyent cachez, & qu'il n'en pourroit estre puni: pource qui Christ auoit satisfait pour iceux: mais pour lors il conoissoit trop tard que ces choses appartenoyent aux esleus de Dieu, and entre les pechez desquels & le throne celeste, Iesus Christ met son sang precieux...<sup>294</sup>

In a similar, but even more terrifying example, Goulart asserted the views of a second man who believed that he was destined for hell. This man apparently concluded that mercy was certain for the elect, but not for him, '...Dieu est Dieu, mais de ses enfans, non pas de moi: sa misericord est certain, mais à ses esleus, &

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid, p.126.

ie suis reprouu  , ie suis vaisseau d'ire & de malediction, & desia ie sens le tourment des enfers.<sup>295</sup> These tales are distinctly confessional in their tone, emphasising an article of faith central to the Calvinist religion. It was a belief which was reiterated at length in the final volume of the Histoires Admirables.<sup>296</sup> This message was, doubtless, a reassurance for the Reformed in France who suffered for their religion. Whilst the true believer could face death with peace and reassurance, the sinner would be tormented by guilt and fear. God would, above all, protect the elect. And, as Goulart believed, the elect were the Reformed.<sup>297</sup>

This notion of suffering and belief was a common theme in Protestant writing in general and Goulart's works in particular. For Goulart, a man deeply connected with his Protestant past, was well aware that the faithful were made to suffer for their beliefs. After the mass abjurations of 1572, Goulart had to emphasise the importance of maintaining the Reformed faith, even though the rewards of doing so might not be immediately apparent. God, Goulart repeatedly emphasised in his work, had not deserted the Huguenot faithful. After decades of conflict and demoralisation, many could no longer believe that God was Protestant. Even after all that they had suffered the Huguenots continued to be on the losing side. It became a faith deeply associated with suffering. To be a Huguenot meant a significant sacrifice, both financially and personally. Many were involved in the

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<sup>293</sup> See for example Goulart, Histoires Admirables, vols. 3 & 4, pp.56, 62 and 136.

<sup>294</sup> Goulart, Histoires Admirables, vols.1 & 2, p.164.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid, p.162.

<sup>296</sup> Goulart, Histoires Admirables, vols. 3 & 4, p.41ff.

<sup>297</sup> One of the dilemmas which faced the Reformed was their belief that the elect were only a small minority. The situation which they faced in France, therefore, suited their faith. As they stood by the beginning of the seventeenth-century, under 10% of the population were part of the Huguenot church, a group which readily identified themselves with the elect. The dilemma which they faced, therefore, was

war itself, and few could escape its consequences. For those living in Protestant strongholds such as La Rochelle and Sancerre, they faced several long, arduous sieges. Others, however, were subject to discrimination and oppression on a daily basis, not least because the Huguenots often faced severe financial penalties for their faith, and even greater upheaval for those, like Goulart himself, who were forced into voluntary exile. Even people who remained apart from the military conflict could hardly have avoided the consequences of a long and expensive war. Many Huguenots had to contribute to the upkeep of the Protestant army, whilst others faced the devastation caused by innumerable troops, of various persuasions, destroying their land and seizing their crops. This set of circumstances would have tried the faith of even the most resilient individuals.

The majority of Goulart's works are driven by a need to defend and preserve the Huguenot faith. Whilst many could have considered Goulart hypocritical, living as he did in the relative safety and comfort of Geneva, he developed a genre of literature which in essence was explicitly time specific, whilst illustrating numerous statements of the Christian faith. In this situation, therefore, Goulart's works of Protestant history, took on a greater significance: they all showed that faith, if constant, would guide and protect the most vulnerable people in society. Goulart, despite his physical removal from France for most of his adult life, remained in touch with the psyche of the Huguenots. In part, as he himself underlined in the Histoire des martyrs, refugees from all over France arrived in Geneva, each with his own particular story. He was also in touch with various pastors who lived and worked in France, and on several occasions had himself

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what would have happened if their quest to protestantise the whole of France had been successful? The



worked as a minister within these communities. More than many other writers, Goulart had an ability to empathise and understand the very real needs of the communities of believers with which he worked. As much as any writer could be in the early seventeenth century, Goulart was a self-consciously popular writer, illustrating his ideas and themes in a style of writing already familiar from canards and broadsides.

In Goulart's works, adherence to the Calvinist faith was not easy. God's protection had to be earned. Even the elect had to prove their worthiness. Nor was Goulart in any doubt that humankind was gripped by sin and lawlessness, in part the consequence of the immorality which he believed pervaded every aspect of society. Whatever steps man took to improve his life, however hard he tried to live a life free of sin, it would simply never be sufficient. Humankind would never be able to live a truly godly life. Goulart, whilst acknowledging man's natural tendency towards sin, never saw humankind as anything but sinful. Whilst some did show exemplary behaviour this was exceptional. In part, Goulart's negativism must have stemmed from his own deep sense of unworthiness before God. Whilst many contemporaries would have shared this view, the depths of Goulart's despair is striking. God, in Goulart's eyes, remained an awesome, and in many respects, remote power. This image of man's relationship with God is a striking theme throughout the Histoires Admirables. Once more, Goulart's own personal insights and skill as a writer give a unique insight into this period of Reformed history.

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essence of the Calvinist faith was simply not geared towards a religion which included the majority.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to demonstrate the central importance of Simon Goulart within early modern literary history. Whilst never a truly original thinker, his works still remain valuable and powerful historical documents, not least because he was so well positioned to comment upon a variety of contemporary events. Simply because his works were not necessarily original, but derivative in nature, should not detract from their interest and fascination as powerful and meaningful documents. Indeed, taken as a whole, his works are a deeply personal narrative and critique of both a compelling and complex period. If Goulart's powerful and dynamic writings were ignored, one of the most important writers of the early modern period would be sidelined. Any study of the history of the period following the death of Calvin would be deficient without a consideration of the life and works of Simon Goulart. Goulart was a figure of such central importance in the religious, political and literary history of the period that his life and writings simply cannot be ignored.

Within this context, the Histoires Admirables is an entirely representative document. Indeed, as this thesis has shown, the Histoires Admirables drew on and discussed so many of the issues which proved central to the Calvinist movement during this period. Goulart had an immensely powerful and well-informed position from which to comment upon contemporary events which effected both the Genevan church and the wider Reformed movement. Not only did he have a remarkable flair for writing the history of the momentous events around him, he had a vast network of contacts from where he was able to gain his

information. His literary knowledge, combined with his personal contacts, ensured that he had a deeper understanding of the recent past than many of his generation. Having travelled to France himself on various occasions, both on personal business and as a minister of the church, Goulart had a privileged vantage point from which to comment upon contemporary issues. He recognised and understood all too well the problems which the Reformed church faced in France. Furthermore, having served both the Reformed army, as well as numerous religious communities within Geneva and France, Goulart was qualified to criticise and comment on the struggle which the Reformed faced at all levels. As Goulart's works chronicle, and as this thesis has shown, the Reformed church struggled for decades to reform many of the most basic social habits of its community of believers. As Goulart understood from his visits to his native France, the Reformed were constantly prevented from openly practising their faith because of Catholic opposition. In particular, areas which remained under the influence of a Catholic overlord led to particular problems for the Reformed.<sup>298</sup> Even the Genevans, so Goulart believed, had not formed a society in the true image of God. Goulart was not a remote theoretician, but was a man who had devoted the vast majority of his long working life in tackling the problems of the church which he served for so many years. Indeed, he wrote about what he best knew and understood.

Goulart was a master compiler of numerous contemporary sources: like many contemporaries, he believed that this was how history should be written and used.

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<sup>298</sup> In a letter which Goulart wrote in 1583 whilst he was still in Tremilly he asserted, 'Il y a mesmes des gentilhommes qui s'abstiennent de venir aux cene et aux preches en ne font plus d'exercice de la religion...Quoy que vostre Eglise aint de grandes maladies'. Further still, it would seem that this

For Goulart history was a compilation of events, drawn together by his own narrative. Together, this formed some of the most powerful and dynamic historical works which were written during this period, works which are of central importance to an understanding of this complex era. The most significant of these works include the Histoires des martyrs, the Memoires de l'estat de France, the Memoires de la ligue and the Recueil de choses memorables, a list which does not give justice to the vast outpouring of literature following the massacres of St. Bartholomew. Indeed, preserved within these various historical works, Goulart included many of the most important historical documents of his time, detailing the crucial events which occurred during his lifetime.<sup>299</sup> Together, these works deepen and enhance our knowledge and understanding of this little considered era. As the Histoires Admirables strikingly revealed Goulart was fascinated by history, intrigued by the multifaceted nature of the past: in his hands history had a two-fold purpose. His historical works became books of both edification and entertainment, works designed to be both instructive and memorable. The Histoires Admirables epitomises this two-fold achievement. Goulart has left us with a rich and fascinating account of many of the events which proved of greatest significance to the Reformed. Always more than a translator, Goulart was a skilled storyteller, deeply critical and observant, an individual whose writings have helped shape and define our understanding of the past.

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situation was seriously exacerbated by the opposition of the local nobility. See the Registres, vol.IV, p.361f

<sup>299</sup> Even his letters were packed with information relating to contemporary political and religious events. In particular Goulart was preoccupied with the often violent Savoyard threat to Geneva. One episode, the Escalade, quickly became notorious. The Registres recorded this fearful event in 1603. 'Deux cents brigands armez et determinez entrerent pas escalade lors par dessus le mirailles entre la porte neufue & le mannage'. See Registres, vol.VI, p.402. This continuing threat from Savoy had preoccupied Goulart for many years. In 1589 for example, Goulart published his Expositio verissima, a Latin defence of Geneva's war against Savoy.

This thesis seeks to understand several issues which proved so central to the life of one of the most important pastors in the Reformed church. Goulart lived through a complicated and turbulent time, but he believed that by describing these events reform could be furthered and knowledge of the church deepened. For Goulart the past was more than simply propaganda: it was a means of educating the Reformed, of cataloguing the development of the true church. He was no mere cipher, however. As the Histoires Admirables recorded so tellingly, he was a severe critic of the Reformed, chastising both their public and private behaviour. In so doing he followed a familiar agenda. Beyond this, Goulart used history as a means of indicating God's often obscure will over mankind. Indeed, so valuable were collections such as the Histoires Admirables that Goulart pleaded that those readers who were able should keep their own record of similar events as they occurred, adding to this bank of instructive memories. Ultimately, as Goulart's historical works indicated, the true believer would always be protected by God, even if justice was not seen to be done within the present. In contrast, all who perverted His laws would be punished, however obscure this revenge would seem. This was a constant message of hope and consolation for those suffering persecution and hardship as a consequence of their belief, in particular in France, but was a message which was easily transferable to Protestants all over the world. Like others before him, Goulart acted as a learned guide for his readers, steering them through the myriad of possible interpretations. This was how Goulart understood and utilised his past.

Goulart was a prolific writer, a man who devoted his life to his faith, even when this fell against his better judgement. He remained deeply concerned about the future of the Reformed church, moved by his belief that the church was being slowly destroyed by the immorality of its followers. Whilst Goulart strongly believed that man could never truly reform, improvements could be made. Despite this, on a personal level, Goulart had no perception of his self-worth. He considered that he, like the rest of humankind, was worthless before God, a creature of no value or importance. However hard he strove and fought against sin Goulart believed that he could never be of truly pure. Goulart found little good in humankind and no more good in himself. He could never understand why God would choose him to be one of the elect, however hard he tried. Gerard Manley Hopkins once wrote, 'I am gaul, I am heartburn, God's most deep decree, Bitter would have me taste, My taste was me'.<sup>300</sup> Goulart had strikingly similar emotions.

Whilst Goulart remains an elusive character, rarely including any personal details in his writings, an in-depth study of his writings in general, and the Histoires Admirables in particular, rewards the reader with a deeper insight into the compelling mental world of this leading reformer, as well as an enhanced knowledge of the political, social and religious world in which he lived and worked. Here he combined his literary and practical knowledge to considerable effect. His works are a long neglected source for the history of Geneva, France and the Reformed church in general. He wrote about the world and life he knew most intimately, and was at one and the same time one of its most fervent allies

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<sup>300</sup> See Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'I wake and Feel the Fell of Dark', in Collected Poems (London,



and its harshest critics. A study of his work is long overdue, and his writings, although often difficult, give a deep and important insight into many of the most crucial events of the Reformed church following the death of Calvin.

## APPENDIX

### GOULART'S PRINCIPAL WORKS

1570 - Voeu pour les martyrs à Dieu tout bon et tout puissant, published in Jean Crespin's Histoire des Vrais Tesmoins, Geneva.

1574 - Imitations Chrestiennes, Geneva

1574 - La Gaule Françoisse de François Hotman, Geneva. Goulart's translation of Hotman's Franco - Gallia

1575 - Légende veritable de Jean le Blanc, Geneva

1575 - Le passe - temos de Jean le Blanc, Geneva

1576-7 - Memoires de l'estat de France sous Charles neufiesme, Geneva

1577 - La Republique des Suisses, Geneva. A translation of Josias Simler's Republica Helvetiorum

1579 - Histoires, Disputes et Discours des Illusions et Impostures des Diables. A translation of Johann Weyer's De Praestigiis daemonum

1579 - Chronique et Histoire Universelle

1580 - Histoires Ecclésiastiques des Eglises Reformées au Royaume de France, Geneva. A reworking of Beza's Histoires Ecclésiastiques

1581 - Les vrais pourtraits des hommes illustres, Geneva. A translation of Beza's Icones

1581 - Histoire du Portugal. A translation of Osorius.

- 1581-82 - Les Oeuvres de P. de Saluste, Seigneur du Bartas
- 1582 - Les Vies des Hommes Illustres...comparees par Plutarque de Chaeronea...Transletées par M. Jacques Amyot
- 1582 - Histoire des Martyrs
- 1584 - Les Devins ou commentaire des principales sortes de devination de Peucer, Geneva. A translation from the Latin.
- 1587 - Excellens discours de J. de l'Espine, Basle
- 1587-99 - Premier volume du recueil contenant les choises memorables aduenues soubs la ligue
- 1589 - Expositio verissima, Basle. A Latin defence of the war between Geneva and Savoy
- 1593 - Six paradoxes Chrestiens, extraicts des Homelies de saint Jean - Chrysosteme, Geneva
- 1594 - Excellent traité du Mariage spirituel entre Jesus Christ et son Eglise, de Jérôme Zanchi.
- 1594 - Les politiques de Juste Lipsius, Geneva
- 1595 - Les Oeuvres Morales et Meslées de Seneque, Paris.
- 1595 - Recueil de choses memorables advuenues en France, sur les règnes de Henri II, François II, Charles IX et Henri III
- 1600 - Thresor d'histoires admirables et memorables de nostre temps (first volume)
- 1603 - Les méditations historiques de M. Philippe Camerarius, Lyon
- 1604 - L'histoire de Pays - Bas, Geneva
- 1605 - Le Sage Vieillard, Lyon
- 1608 - Les discours ascétiques

1609 - Méditations Chrestiennes

1613 - Considerations de la mort, Geneva.

1618 - Anthologie Morale et Chrestienne, Geneva.

1623 - Le sage chrestien

1622 - Consideration de la Sagesse de Dieu, Geneva.

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